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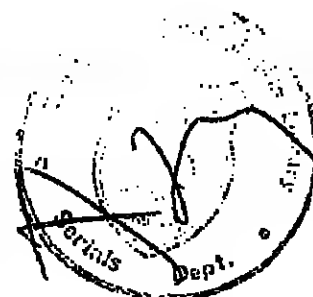
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Agrarian History 590

Architecture 575

Biography &amp; Memoirs 576, 580

Commentary 582-83

Criticism 591

Diplomacy 585-86

English History 571-72, 581

Fiction 579, 593-94

Paperbacks 595

Poetry 577, 592

Religion 573-74, 587-89

Russia/Eastern Europe 578

## INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

- ALEXANDER, PETER *Roy Campbell* [Victoria Glendinning] 580  
 ALLEN, JUDY *December Flower* [Patricia Craig] 593  
 BAKER, FELIX and HUIE, RALPH *London: As it might have been* [Hermione Hobhouse] 575  
 BERT, STEPHEN *With Akmatov at the Black Gates* [William Scammell] 592  
 BLESSING, RICARDO *A Closed Book* [William Scammell] 592  
 BLUM, JEROME (Editor) *Our Forgotten Past: Seven Centuries of Life on the Land* [L. R. Poos] 590  
 BOSWORTH, DAVID *The Death of Descartes* [Helen Harris] 594  
 BROOKER, ANITA *Providence* [Galen Strawson] 579  
 BULL, GEORGE *Inside the Vatican* [Michael Walsh] 594  
 BURROWAY, JANET *Material Goods* [William Scammell] 574  
 CARROLL, ROBERT P. *From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* [James Barr] 592  
 COLEMAN, TERRY *Thanksgiving* [William Logan] 587  
 COLLEY, LINDA *In Defence of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714-60* [Eveline Cruickshanks] 594  
 COLLIER, BASIL *Hidden Weapons: Allied Secret or Undercover Services in World War II* [David Hunt] 581  
 COSTELLO, BONNIE *Marlowe Moore* [Alan Brownjohn] 586  
 CROWLEY, JONNIE *Little, Big* [Alan Bold] 577  
 CURTIS, DON *The World to Come* [Stewart R. Sutherland] 593  
 ENGELS, JONN *Vivendi in Early Fall* [William Scammell] 574  
 FISCHER-GALATI, STEPHEN (Editor) *Eastern Europe in the 1980s* [Alex Pravda] 592  
 GRAYSON, RICARDO *The Mountains Murders* [T. J. Binyon] 578  
 GRIGSON, CROFT *Freedom of the Parish* [Charles Causley] 594  
 HARVEY, A. E. (Editor) *God Incarnate: Story and Belief* [J. L. Houlden] 576  
 HASS, ROBERT *Praise* [William Scammell] 589  
 HELLER, MICHEL and NEKRICH, ALEXANDER *L'Utopie au pouvoir: Histoire de l'URSS de 1917 à nos jours* [Alex Novic] 592  
 HOBBSMAN, GERALD *The Art of Coins and Their Photography* [Andrew Burnett] 578  
 KEE, ALISTAIR *Constantine versus Christ* [Henry Chadwick] 573-74  
 KOSINSKI, JERZY *Pinball* [Adam Mars-Jones] 579  
 KRICK, JONN *A Totally Free Man* [Laura Marcus] 594  
 LAURIE, EMMANUEL LE ROY and GOV, JOSEPH *Time and Agrarian History from the Fourteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* [G. E. Mingay] 590  
 LASCHELLS, MARY *The Story-Teller Retrieves The Past* [A. S. Byatt] 591  
 LATHEN, EMMA *Green Grow the Dollars* [T. J. Binyon] 594  
 LAVIS, LARRY *The Dollmaker's Ghost* [William Scammell] 592  
 MCCLURE, JOHN A. *Kipling and Conrad* [Peter Keating] 591  
 MACKENZIE, DONALD *Raven's Revenge* [T. J. Binyon] 594  
 MELVILLE, JAMES *The Ninth Netsuke* [T. J. Binyon] 594  
 MORGAN, DAVID HOBSON *Harvesters and Harvesting 1840-1900* [Pamela Horn] 590  
 NIATUM, DUANE *Songs for the Harvester of Dreams* [William Scammell] 592  
 OLCOTT, ANTHONY *Murder in the Red October* [Savkar Altin] 593  
 PORTER, ROY *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* [W. A. Speck] 581  
 POTOK, CHAIM *The Book of Lights* [Monty Halpern] 594  
 REVELL, PETER *Quest in Modern American Poetry* [Steve Ellis] 592  
 ROWSE, A. L. *A Cornish Childhood* [Charles Causley] 576  
 SCHMIDT, OUSTAV *England in der Krise: Grundzüge und Grundlagen der britischen Appearment-Politik (1930-1937)* [Paul Kennedy] 585-86  
 SEAROOK, JEREMY *Unemployment* [Phyllis Willmott] 576  
 SIMPSON, DOBOTHY *Six Feet Under* [T. J. Binyon] 579  
 SINCLAIR, CLIVE *Bed Bugs* [Thomas Sutcliffe] 594  
 SMART, NIMIAN *Beyond Ideology* [Geoffrey Parrinder] 589  
 SMITH, F. B. *Florence Nightingale* [Richard Shannon] 571-72  
 SOMERVILLE, ROBERT *Scotia Pontificia: Papal Letters to Scotland before the Pontificate of Innocent III* [Gordon Donaldson] 588  
 SWINBURNE, RICHARD *Faith and Reason* [D. Z. Phillips] 588  
 TIMKO, MICHAEL and others (Editors) *Dickens Studies Annual 9* [John Batchelor] 591  
 TODD, JOHN M. *Luther* [Robert Scribner] 587  
 TRENNER, ANNE *School House in the Wind* [Charles Causley] 576  
 DRAWIN, J. C. *Up From The Lizard* [Charles Causley] 576  
 VAN BINSEBOORN, WIM M. J. *Religious Change in Zambia* [Lucy Mair] 589  
 VAN WALLEBOEN, MICHAEL *More Trouble with the Obvious* [William Scammell] 592  
 WALSH, CHAO *Hang Me Up My Begging Bowl* [William Scammell] 592  
 WILES, MAURICE *Faith and the Mystery of God* [Donald M. MacKinnon] 588  
 WILSON, R. B. J. *Henry James's Ultimate Narrative: The Golden Bowl* [Mark Casserley] 591  
 WOHLFEL, RAINER *Einführung in die Geschichte der deutschen Reformation* [Robert Scribner] 587

- Exhibitions: *Picasso and the Theatre* Brighton Festival; *Art Deco Designs* Royal Shakespeare Theatre  
 Television: *The Woman in White* BBC TV [Anne Duchen] 582  
 Theatre: *Uncle Vanya* Lyttelton Theatre [Laurence Kelly] 583  
*Valmoult* Chichester Festival Theatre [Alan Hollinghurst] 583

- Poems: Gavly Ewari, 'If', Patrick Hare, 'Treasure', Anne Stevenson, 'Ponnie'  
 Letters: on Tennyson, 'The Mathematical Experience', Counter-tenors and castrati  
 Among this week's contributors  
 Author: Author  
 Paperbacks in brief

581, 578, 572

584

585

586

587

588

589

590

591

592

593

594

595

## An icon and her intrigues

Richard Shannon

F. B. SMITH:

Florence Nightingale: Reputation and Power

228pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.

07099 2314 7

The first thing to be said is that this is a brilliant polemic. It is not a biography, it is a commentary on the evidence bearing on the life and career of our best-known historical folk-heroine. The image of Florence Nightingale, the Lady with the Lamp in the Scutari hospital, now features on one of our more commonly used banknotes. She shares with Sir Isaac Newton and the Duke of Wellington the status of an officially sanctified national icon. It is probable - indeed it is devoutly to be wished - that no other of our sanctified national images will receive the devastating treatment meted out here to Miss Nightingale (as F. B. Smith scrupulously addresses her throughout his book). A national sensibility can bear only so much in the way of iconoclasm. As iconoclast Dr Smith is almost too good. He cross-examines Miss Nightingale in the witness-box of history with what can only be described as a calm ferocity leavened with saving touches of dispassionate hatred. His purpose is to expose her to us as a consummate confidence-trickster: an hysterical, a bully, a liar, a manipulator, an ingrate, an intriguer, a bluffer, a well-born modder with a lust for authority, sexually infantile, a betrayer, dogmatically ignorant, avid for fame behind a facade of well-publicized modesty, a paranoid deceiver, above all as one who set about deliberately and consistently distorting and perverting the historical record to her own advantage and in the service of her monstrous "sacralized egoism".

A formidable indictment: and to the extent that Miss Nightingale was successful in her sin and has been accordingly prosperous in her iniquity this exposure is correspondingly formidable. And, as is usual in such cases of demolition, it is often very funny. Do such cases raise questions of taste? One cannot label the dead: but can one be gratuitously cruel? In Florence Nightingale's case one must conclude on the evidence offered here that she is getting as good as

she gave. Smith has a dry Australian manner and an acerbic wit. He eschews anything in the way of coarse mockery. His method rather is of finely honed and tellingly effective understatement. Perhaps it is fanciful to detect an Australian edge to this encounter between a professorial fellow at Canberra and one of the finest specimens of your haughty, interfering, over-weening opinionated, Unitarian-Utilitarian reformist and intolerably bossy English dames. Certainly there is nothing here of Lytton Strachey's feline Bloomsbury touch. There are no winks or nods.

In any case, though Strachey had a sure iconoclastic instinct he depended on published materials. Standmore's *Memoir of Sidney Herbert* (1906) could only hint that Miss Nightingale was a little lower than

the angels; and Sir Edward Cook's great biography (1913), though perceptive and acute as well as thorough, was necessarily tactful. All subsequent studies until this one have been essentially recensions of Cook, lively and underrated in the case of Margaret Goldsmith and pretentious and overrated in the case of Cecil Woodham-Smith. The simple provenance of Smith's exercise is that in the course of his recent work in matters of Victorian policy on health and sanitation he has had occasion to read the massive collections of Nightingale Papers, mostly in the British Library and the Greater London Record Office.

What revealed itself was a pattern of discrepancy between the primary evidence and received opinion. Received opinion was the consequence.

It emerged, of manipulations by Florence Nightingale for Florence Nightingale. Smith's technique is simple. He subjects every statement, claim, assertion, implication and accusation made by Nightingale to a "fresh, close examination of the Nightingale Papers". He is as indefatigable as a historian as Nightingale was as an intriguer. Thus he is in a position to say, as in one characteristic example: "Every sentence in this letter contains, as the reader will have perceived, a half-truth, lie or threat." Of these evidences there is copious abundance. And it undoes Miss Nightingale. The question asks itself: why did she not destroy the evidence? We can only speculate, as Smith suggests, that Nightingale, "like Mr Richard Nixon and his tapes or Donald Crowhurst and his

false sailing records, was so possessed with the habit of deceit... Having bruized out lies in life she would have them out in death." Or, more subtly: "It seems to be that in these situations" - in this instance her failure to get her way against Cranborne (Salisbury), as an "intelligent reactionary" immune to her wiles - "her lies, as told to acolytes and prospective supporters, lose their ordinary connotation as being intended to deceive and instead become the materials for a fantasy which was real enough to her as she wrote."

There can be no question, on the testimony Smith provides, that Nightingale was habitually either (according to taste) a liar or a fantasist. His book is punctuated by recurring reminders. "Miss Nightingale's uncorroborated accounts of her troubles cannot be trusted." "There is no evidence for this version, and much evidence to indicate that it could not have happened." "This story" - "consummate web-spinning" - "is not supported by the Middlesex Hospital archives." "Miss Nightingale's account of her good works at the Middlesex Hospital constitutes a memorable example of her powers as a titillating fabulist." On Nightingale's assertion that Sidney Herbert had recorded an admission that all his work at the War Office had been "coined out of her brain": "I have found no letter which says this." As to the celebrated partnership with Herbert: "The surviving correspondence... suggests the opposite: behind Herbert's back she was envious and disparaging." There is no evidence to sustain the myth much propagated by Nightingale that Herbert's dying words were "Poor Florence - our unfinished work". One of the cruellest things she did was to deny Lady Herbert and Arthur Gordon (Stanmore) access to Herbert's letters to her on the maliciously hinted ground that they would reveal him as humiliatingly dependent upon her. Smith does justice faithfully to Nightingale on that score: "Florence's reply is quintessentially Nightingale: insidiously unctuous, effrontedly evasive, thoroughly egotistical and iron-hard, glossing a lifetime of deceit and cherished crimes."

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same. Of the much-traded Sir Ben Hawes at the War Office. "The little evidence we have suggests that Hawes deserved better. On the much maligned Dr Hall in the Crimea: 'I'll finally counter by threatening to hold an open enquiry, but at home the lying went on.' But even this precaution was insufficient to thwart Miss Nightingale's outrageous stratagem which was, as she exulted, unimpeachable at home - but only so because it was, as she exulted, unimpeachable at home. As with Herbert, the Nightingale myth celebrates a fruitful comradeship with Lord Lawrence both at the India Office and as governor general. "Biographers have accepted Miss Nightingale's fiction and presented her and Lawrence as united in their pursuit of the goal of salubrious India. There is no evidence that Lawrence acceded to any of her overtures. Like Cranborne he regarded her as a tiresome noddler. She never understood that India was very hot." He knew far too much about India to take seriously her "dream of making India a clean, sober, Arcady." Miss Nightingale thought that, compared with the Irish, the "Hindoo" were "almost gentlemen" and worthy of her attention; and indeed Smith points out that Ireland, a country close at hand and crying out for reforming and philanthropic attentions, was ignored by Nightingale.

How is all this to be explained? How she got away with it is a relatively simple matter. She was, in her way, a genius. She got to the point of being "beguiled by her own effrontery in playing the power game". And: "There is a novelist's perversity in these paragraphs." She had a way of setting up a fantasy and persuading herself, and others, of its reality. As usual Miss Nightingale began with a reverie and ended with a dramatic imperative. "Here, as she so often did when defeated, Miss Nightingale constructed a world in which she was both heroine and victim, betrayed by her acolytes." She made a fine art out of "that fine-tuned double bluff" which was one of her stocks in trade. Nightingale's first battlefield was the Upper Harley Street Institution, which she briskly took over and reformed to extinction. Already her style was mature in this baptism of fire. "She superbly assured epigrammatic Byronic prose by a process of stylistic legerdemain turns small gains with linen and jetties into mighty personal feasts and big setbacks into everybody's moral shortcomings. By style and instinct she was a consummate politician."

That style and instinct made her adept at the technique of "cover up" and "screen". Smith cites particularly in point here the case of her "blundering connection with King's College Hospital." Effrontery was the name of her game. No one talked more of the sacredness of "facts", no one conjured more "facts" at will. On her hostility to Catholic and High Church notions of vocation Smith comments: "She found this view of nursing, like her other beliefs, early in her career when she knew little of their results in practice, but she never wavered in her formulas. Her approach was a priori all her life."

But, like the "facts", the n prioriisms slithered about according to convenience. "It is hard to be inflexible, even when one is on the sidelines. Miss Nightingale's pronouncements upon Indian canals, irrigation and drainage always sounded authoritative but they slithered with each blunder and according to the allegiance of the particular high underling she was trying to catch. No one did more to keep cholera alive and well than Nightingale. "Miss Nightingale's opinions about cholera varied through time, but she passionately held to whatever notion happened to occupy her mind and always tried to forbid the propagation of rival theories, even if they were theories she had lately espoused." Unfortunately, "eagerly strident in her dogmatic confusion", she was most consistent where she was most wrong, as in her hostility to germ theory and her attachment to "miasma" (the former connoted "medical" priorities, the latter "nursing").

So much for the general line of cross-examination. What can be

adduced in her defence? Two main points need to be considered: the problem of being a woman in a man's world; and the scope of Nightingale's achievement as a nurse and a founder of the nursing profession. It must be said that Smith deals rather nervously with the second count than with the first. It is certainly true that only a woman could have got away with the effrontery and sheer brazenness of Nightingale's performance. The vexed question is: is one confronted with a package deal, whereby the condition for getting the profession under way was having to take Miss Nightingale all in all, for worse as for better? The Nightingale problem is that she was necessary but wildly over-sufficient. Devoutness was her escapable. Smith is fair on this aspect of her "staterati". "A woman in a man's world, she was adopting a secretarial mode of gaining her ends. Secretive, purposeful, she was to satisfy herself with manipulating persons having executive powers whilst she remained unseen and unused, savouring the private knowledge of the process." (In fact, as becomes clear, she grew increasingly disinclined with being unseen and unused.) Long before H. G. Wells's "piercing evocation of the Webbs, she personified the new Machiavelli." From this point of view her feigned ill-health is defensible, a weapon in her armoury of guile. "Although she kept to her bed during interviews, she was always fully dressed and even into old age she sat upright unoppressed by pillows." She could boast that her bed upstairs gave her a moral advantage she could not have had with a desk in an office.

Yet the question of over-sufficiency keeps obtruding. Smith compares Nightingale with the appalling Mary Carpenter, one of her rivals in the game of folk-heroine reformer and philanthropist. Carpenter, we are assured, was "domineering, authoritarian and cruel, auspicious of fellow reformers and intolerant and inept in handling her subordinates and her charges". In their publicly purring but privately clawing relationship there is more than a touch of black comedy. "Rarely can two egotisms have been so mirrored." Smith is clear that the "stock explanation for the involvement of spinsters in Victorian social reform, the 'superfluous woman' argument, is inadequate to explain the sheer drive and flair of these crusaders who remained unmarried apparently 'for choice.' Miss Nightingale could have become Mrs. Monckton Milnes (whether he would still have gone ahead to form his great collection of pornography is an interesting speculation). Mrs. Josephine Butler is not really an adequate comparative control model. She was formidably effective yet perfectly unmonstrous; but she was married. Nightingale naturally had to combat Mrs Butler as a rival. One of the "shouting

ladies", said Nightingale of her. "She does not want to know facts; she wants to be enthusiastic." Nightingale, of course, invariably had the facts on her side. One of the sufficiencies she demanded was sole leadership. She was a sultana who would hear no sisters near her throne. "Miss Nightingale was never content with the possible when others defined it. Hence in areas where leadership was already pre-empted, such as Mrs Butler's anti-Contagious Diseases Acts agitation, Nightingale tended to be equivocal, evasive, damning with faint praise. Similarly on women's emancipation she was shy, lukewarm, contradictory. To John Stuart Mill on the suffrage question she was 'ingratiating but evasive'." ("Miss Nightingale found the ultimate proof of women's political incapacity in the campaign to register nurses without her consent, thereby demonstrating that women voters would be moral wreckers.")

All this makes Nightingale unsatisfactory for modern feminist purposes. Only on one ground does she offer much comfort: her hatred of the traditional family. ("Man is born into the world - woman into a family.") "People," she asserted, "are robbed & murdered by their families & no one notices - their virtue to do original thought is murdered." Unfortunately, the great eventual product of Nightingale's winning of time to produce original thought, *Suggestions for Thought to the Seafarer After Truth among the Anticans of England* (three vols, 1860), is as clear a case of thought being murdered as might be had. Carlyle's judgment of it as "the bleating of a sheep lost in the wilderness" is apt; and the Rev Benjamin Jowett had to execute some nimble manoeuvres to evade her demands that he edit it. "In an amiable family", Nightingale pointed out, "the common course of things is for everyone to give up just enough to prevent such a row as would make it intolerable." The moral was clear: "But if God wants us to do what we like - we overturn the family."

The one great fundamental fact about Florence Nightingale, was her early discovery that she knew what God wanted, and especially that what she wanted to do and what God wanted were identical; and she spent the rest of her life "overturning the family" by making rows and one of the finest fully documented case-studies of a person who had the genius and the energy to make her kind within her reach suffer for her sense of injury under the cover of charity and philanthropy. Her performance in having her cake and eating it too was a brilliant feat of intellectual legerdemain. Not the least of her difficulties, and hence her sense of injury, was that her family far from obstructing, went out of its way to sympathize and help. She owed, in fact, everything

to it: wealth (their name had recently been changed from Shore on their inheriting yet another fortune), the ramifying connections of a vast crisscrossed and well-born, the traditions of Unitarian social conscience and reform and enlightened views about the rôle of women. She despised her father for his easy-going amiability, and he was made to suffer for his ineffectiveness; he was curiously like the entourage of male "wives" whom Nightingale gathered about her and ruthlessly bossed. Both her mother, Fanny, and her sister, Parthenope, were more formidable. Mother received her punishment in the weakness and dependence of old age (a visit paid under protest in 1872 was the first in "about six years"); and it was mother who had to be wheeled into Florence's room. Parthenope by no means the nonentity depicted in the biographies, was out of reach. She was perceptive about the "poor" in Florence, who had in reality "little or none of what is called charity... she is ambitious, very, and would like to regenerate the world with a grand coup de main. I wish she could see it is the intellectual part that interests her, not the manual. She has no *esprit de conduite*... she was a shocking nurse."

Nightingale was propelled by anger, not by charity. This does not necessarily compromise her claim to recognition. The cause of public cleanliness she served well; as she did also Army and Indian sanitary reform and the development of hospital nursing. "Thousands of men in the British Army at home and abroad lived healthier, longer lives in better conditions because she acted the bully for them." On the status of army medical officers: "Devious and authoritarian though her methods were, Miss Nightingale's priorities were right." On the venereal disease question her arguments were "rationally and were proved right by events." Her insistence that soldiers were not "unmanageable animals" was creditable. Her link with Jowett on the Indian agricultural service was the small and unheralded beginning of a great force for good during the next seventy years. Her *Notes on Hospitals* (third edition, 1863) "remains a brilliant polemic". Her argument, Smith points out, "now looks bizarrely simplistic, but set in the context of seedy, grubby hospital buildings, doctors and patients, it becomes apt and beneficial". Her hostility to vaccination and germ theory was "cruelly unfortunate for her reputation" as well as for those who died because she failed to encourage vaccination, in India especially. Even her bigoted dogmatism about cholera has to be seen in context. "Her ignorance never hindered her from making pronouncements, yet her common sense generally saved her from the callous inanities promulgated by better informed but more owlish authorities."

The ultimate reason for Smith's unrelenting Antonian severity is one suspects, his disgust at Nightingale's virtual self-identification with the Godhead. He discerns, perhaps, a certain chilling typology in which luckless mankind is to be given the benefits of high-minded suffering and renunciation and dedication. It was not simply that she was possessed of a "moody egotism"; nor that she had acute problems of personality that were alleviated only in work, deceit and paranoia; nor yet again that there was a "narcissistic quality of her personality" and that she was an "untiring watcher of herself". What is chilling is the absence of an adult and whole human core. "Florence Nightingale's sexual relationships remained infantile.... Ultimately she made a mystic marriage with God's work." (She would occasionally refer to herself in the male gender; and her "emotional attachments were directed to her own sex and from adolescence onwards she engaged occasionally in sentimentally effusive protestations of love for various female relatives and acquaintances. These sudden outbursts, during which Florence lost her usual staidness and even her court prose-style, were to continue into her old age.") It was, Smith argues, her "struggle to reconcile her egotism with her unfixated, non-Biblical, non-sectarian religiously" which converted problems for herself into problems for her environment. "When she reached her early twenties she had learned to exist with her dilemma by imagining herself a victim of apical persecution and as destined endlessly to re-live Christ's crucifixion. Thereby she mortified her narcissism. Through-out her life apparitions of God came to her (she conducted her verbal intercourse with Him, as Smith observes, in approved Authorized Version vocabulary) to issue instructions for her to fulfil: 'I am another Himself... another *en état de victime*' she would say, and a picture of Christ crowned with thorns hung in her bedroom. She was 'divinely appointed to know. Ultimately, her faith was a sacralized egotism."

## Pennine

Hills? Or a high plateau scissored by rivers? Strong as grass, a winter's crop of stones Creters the drive. The black path trickles. Randomly, fells erupt in armoured cliffs. That might be houses - might, in this cloud, be. Sleek, grit, slag, moss, a memory of mills.

Everything trails to the perpendicular. Trees stand taller on one green root than another. The village is slatted like steps into its slope. Its churchyard paved with graves, thronged with unbalanced Mitred headstones, an asylum of bishops. The dead Are useless. Their graves hardly hold them.

Victorian conscience breathes over church and ruin. A slaty rain. Whoever sent a dove. To star the cross where Thomas Hollnake's buried. Guessed that its message had faded marble. Footsteps and blood stab at the lichened walls. Stonefalls crossing in their long decline.

Anne Stevenson

## RELIGION

### ALISTAIR KEE:

Constantine versus Christ: The Triumph of Ideology 196pp. SCM. £5.95. 0 334 00268 0

Disrespectful, repetitive, energetic, but impatient and at times insufficiently informed, this intriguing book begins with a thesis rather more familiar than the author tells us. Alistair Kee, who is Senior Lecturer at Glasgow University, began his researches by assuming Constantine to have been a Christian in accordance with what he supposed to be the accepted picture. But the political theology he found in the ancient texts convinced him to the contrary. To his surprise he found that in the case of Constantine conversion was not a religious experience of grace but a military and political matter. The emperor showed "no conviction of sin, no blessed assurance, no rest for the troubled soul". His conversion story bore not the least resemblance to St Paul's, or St Augustine's, or John Wesley's.

Religion was indeed a powerful factor in his life and public policy. But for Constantine God appears not to have been an end to be achieved but rather a means to achieve his own rise to be sole emperor of the Roman world and then to maintain the unity of the empire. His conversion was born not of contrition or an inward spiritual crisis, but of a conviction that the God of the hitherto persecuted minority group, the Christians, was supreme "saviour" (the bestower of earthly success) and above all giver of victory on the battlefield. This God enabled him against all odds to liquidate successfully a superstitious society, to replace a rule of "divine" law by a rule of "human" law. The example of Jesus of Nazareth had little or no discernible effect on Constantine's private life, which continued to be a pursuit of wealth, power and secular ambition, with a superiority to scruple enhanced by the belief that it was conducted under the highest patronage. God, he believed, would be propitious to him and his empire if the Church received not only tax-exempt status but a substantial treasury grant; if sacred sites venerated by Christians in Rome and the Holy Land were adorned with noble basilicas at imperial expense; if calligraphers were commissioned to produce fine manuscripts of the Bible; above all, if the priests of the Church continued in union to beseech heaven on his behalf. Disunity in the Church was sure to provoke celestial displeasure and the collapse of prosperity.

As a talisman of victory, the labarum, or monogram formed of the first two letters of Christ's name, was placed as a device on his soldier's shields. His wars were publicized as crusades against such evil and sorcery as the Christian God could bring to naught. The emperor claimed that the Chi-Rho monogram had been given him from heaven on seeing a perihelion wheel on a military campaign, perhaps before the hazardous battle of the Milvian Bridge (AD 312) which gave him control of Italy and the West. The popular cult of the Unconquered Sun may have had some influence in the background. That is the deity to whom the Arch of Constantine gives credit for his triumph. On the coinage solar symbols continue for a dozen years after 312 - until his defeat of Licinius who had a particular devotion to the Sun-god. Christian symbols appear on the coins only gradually. But from the October revolution of 312 Constantine spoke and acted as a man with a mission to en throne Christianity in the empire and beyond.

If this were the framework of Kee's story, there would be no serious ground for dissent from the main features, and the rest of this review could be devoted to details of secondary importance. But his conclusions go much further. He argues that while Constantine invoked the God of the Christians to further his ends, to win his battles and protect

# The emperor as Antichrist

Henry Chadwick



The Serpent Column - which originally bore only three heads - brought by Constantine to his capital from Delphi, depicted together with, probably, the bronze horses brought there from Ephesus by Justinian (which are now on St Mark's, Venice) in a Turkish miniature of ca 1595, reproduced in Norah M. Tilley's *Miniatures from Turkish Manuscripts: A Catalogue and Subject Index of Paintings in the British Library and British Museum* (144pp, with 54 plates. British Library. £45. 0 904654 71 0).

his empire, he was no sort of Christian, not even nominal. Kee is saying much more than drawing attention to his death-bed baptism twenty-five years after the Milvian Bridge. He disputes that Constantine had any private or even public allegiance to Christ, who was far too awkward a model to be given serious place in Constantine's sinister society. He deploys every conceivable argument, even ones of high implausibility, to deny the emperor the least element of unformed charcoal-burner's faith that Jesus Christ had been sent to bring healing to a troubled world. Christ was his rival, not his saviour.

For Kee no fusion of solar monotheism with the veneration of the "Sun of righteousness" can have taken place during the fourth century (though there is evidence in the contrary direction, such as the institution of the Nativity feast on December 25 in the West early in the century). He therefore thinks that solar symbols on Constantine's coins (until 324) kill the notion that from 312 he was known to have adopted Christianity. That assumes, I think unjustifiably, that the emperor at once saw Christianity as an exclusive monotheism invalidating other cults rather than an honouring of the supreme deity at the apex of the pyramid. Perhaps he simply thought that he would hedge his bets, on the principle that one cannot be too careful. Moreover we have no idea how much freedom was given to masters of mints and what instructions they received from the court. That most of the senators and high officials of the court were pagan is certain.

In 313 Constantine agreed with his certainly pagan colleague Licinius at Milan on a policy of religious toleration for all. Kee contends that toleration in such open terms is uncharacteristic of a Christian convert: the Edict of Milan proves his (anti-)hero to be no true believer in Christ. But is not the inference bizarre?

As the book proceeds, the argument enjoys a steady crescendo. More and more windows are confidently opened into the emperor's soul until we end by discerning none other than the father of all lies and deceit. Kee stands in the tradition of those medieval apocalypticists for whom Constantine was the incarnation of Satan robed as an angel of light, an Antichrist figure taking his proud seat in the temple of God and there ousting his rival Christ, corrupting the Church by wealth and power.

Burekhardt is associated with the secularist view that Constantine's conversion was a machiavellian calculation by a cynical politician on the road to power, who saw in the Church a source of popular support to be harnessed to his own highly

secular ends. On this issue Kee speaks with two voices. At one point he declares that in making use of religion for political ends Constantine followed unconscious intuition. At other points the view prevails that his religious policy was conceived with careful deliberation and was anything but unstable. This Constantine is no Monty-like soldier of genius, unsophisticated in theological refinements. His religion was masterfully designed to take over the Church after persecution had proved it too hard a nut to crack, and to exploit it as an instrument of metropolitan of an anti-Christian end, but of actually anti-Christian class and imperialist values. Diocletian failed to beat it, so Constantine decided to join it. Patronage succeeded where persecution failed. Both had the same aim: Constantine destroyed from within what external attack failed to touch.

A radical Protestant or even medieval streak surfaces in occasional suggestions that Catholicism is a product of Constantinian political theory. Without it Kee feels that Christianity would not have developed its episcopal hierarchy; and how congenial to Constantinian principles it is held that the holiness of the sacraments depends on the whole Church as a divine society, not on the moral attainments of individuals, clerical or lay! It is as if the Donation of Constantine expressed a fourth-century ideology.

In support of the contention that Constantine's perversion of the Church to unevangelical ends was no accident, but a diabolically conceived scheme, we are taken in some detail through two works by the Imperial panegyrist and church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea. The texts are the Panegyric which Eusebius delivered at Constantinople in 336 on the occasion of the emperor's thirtieth anniversary and the *Life of Constantine*, most of which Kee would date before 337 but which was probably composed after the emperor's baptism and death at Pentecost 337 and then published after Eusebius' death in 339. In addition Kee discusses the "Address to the Assembly of the Saints", ascribed to Constantine by the manuscripts, but of contested authenticity (that is, Eduard Schwartz thought it entirely authentic, while Norman Baynes thought it spurious). Kee thinks the autobiographical chapters 22-26 come from the emperor's hand, not the rest. One cannot tell, of course, what ghost writers may have been employed to assist. The case against the authenticity of the whole is not strong. (It is hard to accept Kee's compromise view that at least some things is vindicated by a sentence in the fourth book of the *Life of*

Constantine where Eusebius mentions an oration by Constantine with the title "Address to the Assembly of the Saints" and declares that he will append the text. This sentence could easily have provided the impetus for the forger, and proves nothing.)

Eusebius' Panegyric denies the emperor's divinity and asserts monotheism as acknowledged by true Romans. The monadic being of God is reflected in the new monarchy which has replaced the pluralistic tetrarchy of Diocletian. (A pagan panegyrist justified the tetrarchy as corresponding to fourness in nature, in the elements, winds, etc.) So Constantine is God's counterpart on earth and his direct agent. As he is offering not polytheistic sacrifices but the oblation of a pure heart, he is rewarded with peace on earth. Monotheism does not exclude the providential care of the created order by the divine Word or Reason. The Panegyric does not speak of Christ or of his incarnation, and Kee interprets this to mean that in Eusebius' ideology Constantine has replaced Christ - for whom there is no room at the palace.

There can be no dispute that, in the Panegyric, bishop Eusebius is replete about the specifically Christian theme of the incarnation. There is a question to be asked about the conventions of imperial panegyrics. It is a pity Kee has not been able to use Sabine MacCormack's recent study, nor the large monograph by Timothy Barnes. He reads off from Eusebius' reitence an implication that Constantine's lack of Christian convictions, as late as 336, was well known not only to Eusebius but to all his audience at the court. Eusebius' task was to wrap it up in decently obscure rhetoric, but he is almost congratulated by Kee for having done so little to cloak the shaming truth.

Disquiet is also aroused by the discussion of Constantine's legislation preserved in the Theodosian Code of

In the *Life of Constantine* a Christianizing process is carried further, and treated in this book as hagiographical licence. Yet some of the evidence needs a good deal of massage to make it fit. Eusebius quotes letters of Constantine to bishops in which he avowedly associates himself with the Church. He speaks of a dream in which the emperor had a vision of Christ. There is, moreover, Constantine's role at the Council of Nicaea - politically motivated for the preservation of unity without doubt, but not thereby made anti-Christian. There is his letter to the provincials granting a now reluctant toleration to pagans in the hope that they may freely come to the truth; the edicts against polytheism; the policy which is very correctly described as the replacement of the old religion by the new. Why should Antichrist do so much to encourage adherence to the Church? The hagiographer and solid ground.

Kee's section on the Christianizing process in the *Life of Constantine* is marred by a mistake. He writes under the illusion that, in the Bagster translation which he has used, the chapter headings, which are more explicitly Christian than the text, come out of the translator's head and are not renderings of the Greek text of the indices transmitted in the Greek manuscripts of the *Life*. The Greek text has presumably been consulted only for occasional reference or Kee would at once have found his error. These chapter summaries are not necessarily by Eusebius, to whom they refer in the third person, but may nevertheless go back close to the original edition of about 339-40 since some contain good information.

Disquiet is also aroused by the discussion of Constantine's legislation preserved in the Theodosian Code of

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338. It is suggested that the placing of the edicts on religion until the Church in the last of the sixteen books reflects a belief, apparently to be attributed not only to Theodosius II and his jurists but to Constantine a century previously, that for the emperor religion is not a matter of primary importance.

And can fourth-century inonasticism be simply labelled a "middle class movement", as if the Roman empire possessed a middle class capable of moving?

Kee's conclusion is that in its rejection of power and government the original gospel of Christ to the poor was akin to Marxist criticism of Western capitalism, and that Constantine's conversion was to mean the political transformation of the Church into that respectable citadel of bourgeois morality and imperialism which has since then been assumed to be the authentic shape of Christianity. Any facts in the original evidence which conflict with this portrait are roughly handled, either by being dismissed as interpolations or as being too few in number to count against the weight of the rest. So when Eusebius reports the emperor's rebuke to a fawning bishop who congratulated him on his blessed destiny to share Christ's empire in the world to come, Kee believes that Constantine's distress was caused by hearing the naked truth so frankly expressed. Even an Antichrist figure, it seems, does not like his secrets to be exposed.

There is too much prejudice and forcing of the evidence (as well as awkward silence about relevant documents) for this book to be a successful competitor against the heavy guns of Baynes, A. H. M. Jones, Ramsay MacMullen or, now, Timothy Barnes. Its perspective is far from dull but to the historian rather narrow. The unwary reader is likely to gain the impression that Constantine's concept of the Church as an instrument of political policy virtually carried the fourth-century Christians by storm and has been accepted tradition ever since. Any

reader of Augustine's *City of God* knows how false this would be. We should not dispute that Constantine's intense ambition, become fused with his religious allegiance or that the Christian veneration for the highest deity was fundamental to his political theory; that has long been evident to readers of the texts. There is an element in Constantine which wants to fashion the empire in the likeness of the Church, just as his recognition of episcopal arbitrations or his enforcement of ecclesiastical decisions acknowledges a civic and social role for bishops. But a fundamental insincerity in his attachment to Christianity (which is far less than Kee is arguing) would have been politically fatal to him.

This passionate, irreverent, often enjoyable, but essentially wrong-headed book errs by exaggeration and by ruthlessly imposing the features of Antichrist on the emperor. It does not establish its central thesis that the real Constantine was a diabolical manipulator of the Church cynically making use of it to serve his lust for power. Nor is it a necessary conclusion that the least association of the organs of government with the Church, such as Constantine first made possible, must be a long kiss of death from which only a good dose of Marxism can hope to revive it. Above all, this book does not show that the dynamic Constantine was immune to the moral challenge which lay close to the heart of the ancient world. The emperor was not striking for his saintly qualities, but to treat him as the devil incarnate is a bit much. After all he knew Christianity had something to do with morality. There is no mention in the book of the hostile pagan picture in Eunapius of Constantine as a man driven to Christianity by guilt after the assassination of his son Crispus and his wife Fausta, suspected of a Hippolytus/Paedra affair. At least the pagan tradition thought his conversion was not a defunct organ. Julian the Apostate had a terrible hatred of Constantine, but even his indictment falls far short of that in this book.

## Holy look-See

Michael Walsh

GEORGE BULL:

Inside the Vatican  
293pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.  
0 09 140070 8

George Bull has been able to talk to a wide range of Catholic Church dignitaries (many of whom, it is comforting to know, he found good-looking). In Rome and elsewhere he has called upon cardinals in apartments of various sorts, some cosy, other grand. Some prelates twinkled at him and others, in an impressive variety of languages, talked chirpily. A beak-nosed bishop leaned across a desk and pointed himself out in photographs of papal events. Archbishop Helm was unbuttoned: the new Pro-Nuncio at the Court of St James handed out biscuits and cocktails of his own mix, talked animatedly and said his rosary. Mr Bull has prayed in chapels within the Vatican's walls which are not normally open to the public, and in the interest of art has visited sundry bathrooms likewise privileged. In Venice he was "shyly" offered a book by the future Pope John Paul I, and in Rome he has always been saluted by the Swiss Guard, an honour. It appears, never extended to anyone in jeans.

An invitation to a cardinal in the Palazzo dell'Ambasciata seems to have been a high point. The apartment was full of personal treasures, and there were red damask chairs. The dining-room was princely; the table linen was white, the food excellent, the wine crisp and the bonbons were served on a silver dish. To Bull this represents "some of the kind of society which the Vatican City State helps to sustain", and he is glad it still exists. It did cross my mind, however, to wonder what a Central American bishop might make of it

all, as he turned up in Rome to explain why he had closed down his diocese in the face of threats to his clergy, nuns and catechists from right-wing death-squads. The death-squads, too, claim to operate in the name of Catholicism and in defence of "civilized society".

Mr Bull, in fact, is more than a little in awe of the papacy. But as a consequence the "inside" of his book's title means inside the Leonine City State, it does not mean inside the system, nor inside the minds of those who keep the system going. I do not doubt that the author has learnt a great deal, far more than is revealed here. But he does not now want to betray confidences and forfeit friendships by telling all.

None the less there is much between the elegant covers of this book which will entertain the reader. It transpires that the Swiss Guard may be inspected for illegal headwears, and when in full dress they find it next to impossible to answer the telephone: the receiver will not easily fit between ruff and helm. The whole of the Vatican is listed in a UN register as a work of art, which should afford it special protection in time of war; though in an age of nuclear missiles it is difficult to know what such protection might realistically mean. It was pleased to read that there is a pontifical band, but disappointed not to learn more about it. I remain curious to know how Vatican functionaries manage to fit in a thirty-three hour week during office hours which last from nine to one-thirty.

There is much information here, but not all of the *obiter scripta* are to be relied on. Petros's Pope can certainly be traced back beyond King Canute, and if early rulers of Wessex were "in the habit" of retiring to Rome (at least two certainly did so), so were Kings of Mercia. Encyclicals may be "among the oldest forms of papal communication", but in their present form and title they did not

come into regular use until the middle of the eighteenth century. I would like to know precisely what Bull means when he writes that the Holy See's claims "to sovereignty and independence have been recognized since the earliest days of Christian history"; and I do not see why the present system of conclave preserve the Church from "monosyllabic results" in papal elections. The conclave method did not prevent the Church from the Great Schism, nor prevent long-drawn-out periods of sede vacante. The arguments against changing the system of election is that the new methods so far proposed would have far-reaching consequences for the constitution of the Roman Catholic Church. But, though usually put forward in the interest of greater involvement by the whole body of Catholics in the running of the Church, they would in effect bolster the hierarchy, or "pyramidal", model of the Church as beloved by Vatican officials.

Mr Bull is certainly aware of the problems facing the Holy See, but he does not address himself to them at length in this book. It does not embark upon any discussion of major issues concerning the Vatican's relationship with the rest of the Catholic world. Bull does not lose touch with his solidly liberal sentiments, but neither does he seriously ask himself what the whole Vatican structure is for. And, for someone who is Editor-in-Chief of *Director* magazine, he is curiously unclear and uninformative about Vatican finances. He seems genuinely distressed at the "lackadaisical" response of the world's Catholics to the financial plight of the Holy See; but the system for which support is canvassed is one which maintains a model of the papacy that is difficult to defend theologically, often at odds with the Church's mission in the world outside Rome, and out of keeping with the current eccumenical temper.

would require him to rethink his philosophical position.

None the less Cupitt may reject the suggestion that he does in fact have ontological commitments built into his position. Such a reaction would find him in even deeper water, for now he is taking rather seriously the hyperbole of his earlier claims that modern man must be the creator of religious meaning and value. This view does in fact make the fact that there is much here that is admirable. The chapter on Christ the frontist is first-class and would bear further expansion. The "guiding principles" which are recommended - truth, disinterestedness, creativity and love - are to be wholeheartedly endorsed (even if the third is currently used as an excuse for much humbug). More significantly, theologians and philosophers must be assessed on their questions, as well as on their answers. The point that much of the inevitable tribal ecclesiastical criticism will miss is that all of the questions which Mr Cupitt asks are important, and that a Church which fails to take them seriously is suffering from a failure of intellect and nerve. It will also not notice the significant group of those within and beyond the boundaries of the churches who will buy, read and be stimulated by this book as much as they were by *Taking Leave of God*.

To a greater or lesser extent most religions accept such authoritative figures. Cupitt ought not to for a number of reasons: on the one hand he has discarded the idea of special insights into metaphysical truth; on the other he has stressed the importance of individual creativity. More strikingly, a major part of his polemic against traditional forms of theology is based on the accusation that religious authority is dangerous since it has been used to bolster political authority and vice versa. A strong case can be made in support of such an analysis of some forms of religious practice; but as Cupitt does not seem to allow, objectivist theories and natural-law theories of ethics can be as effective in the support of individual freedoms as, alas, they have been in their suppression. Equally, subjective theologians which invite one on a pilgrimage leading to an unseen and unseeable (because non-cognitive) finality, may simply

substitute one form of control for another. Cupitt has been so engrossed in ejecting objectivism, authoritarian types of theology from the front door that he has not guarded against the subjectivist brother approaching stealthily from the back.

It is clear then that I have deep reservations about the forms of spirituality which Don Cupitt is recommending to us, but this should not mask the fact that there is much here that is admirable. The chapter on Christ the frontist is first-class and would bear further expansion. The "guiding principles" which are recommended - truth, disinterestedness, creativity and love - are to be wholeheartedly endorsed (even if the third is currently used as an excuse for much humbug). More significantly, theologians and philosophers must be assessed on their questions, as well as on their answers. The point that much of the inevitable tribal ecclesiastical criticism will miss is that all of the questions which Mr Cupitt asks are important, and that a Church which fails to take them seriously is suffering from a failure of intellect and nerve. It will also not notice the significant group of those within and beyond the boundaries of the churches who will buy, read and be stimulated by this book as much as they were by *Taking Leave of God*.

Three professors at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, have collaborated in *The Spirit of Anglicanism*. Hooker, Maurice, Temple edited by William J. Wolf (212pp. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. £4.95. 0 567 29111 1). John E. Booty writes on Richard Hooker, and Owen C. Thomas on William Temple, while the editor contributes a bold central chapter on Frederick Denison Maurice and a concluding one, "Anglicanism and the Spirit", which delineates the Anglican identity as "a way of being Christian that involves a pastorally and liturgically oriented dialogue between four partners: Catholics, evangelicals, and advocates of reason and experience".

## ARCHITECTURE

# The great unbuilt

Hermione Hobhouse

FELIX BAKER AND RALPH HYDE:

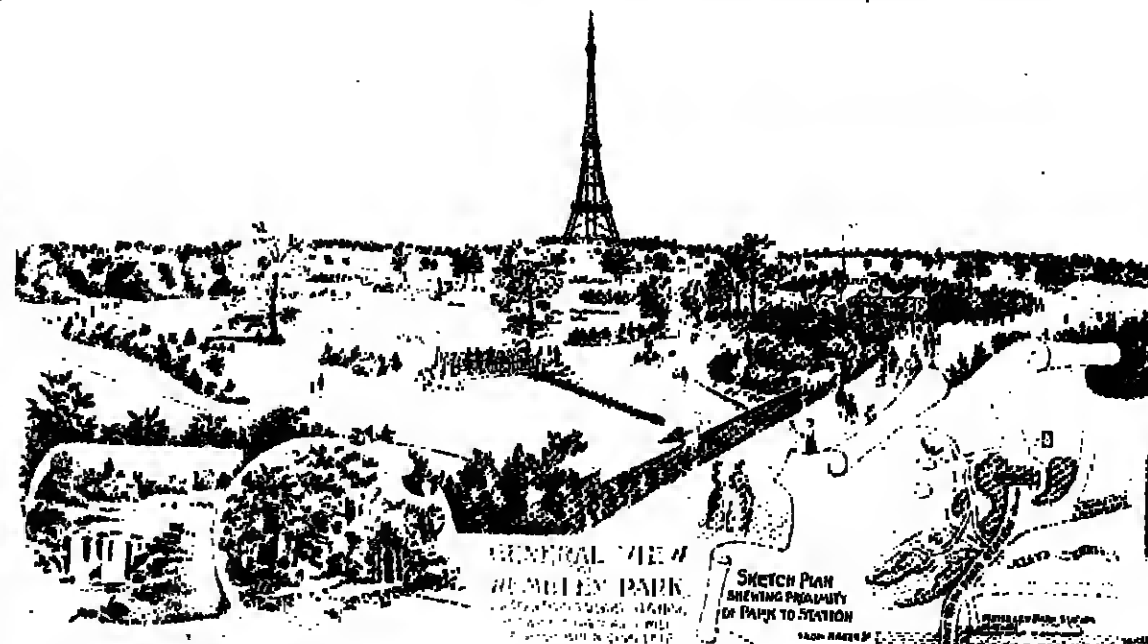
London: As it might have been  
223pp. John Murray. £12.50.  
0 7185 3857 2

"London is often described as ugly, but it is not past redemption. Though ill-proportioned and shapeless, it has a noble river, unvalued parks, a few fine buildings; and it may be possible to evolve out of the chaos of its streets a city which will be a worthy capital of the world." Arthur Cawston was writing in 1893, but he speaks for many improvers, and even more would-be improvers, whose ideas are analysed and illustrated in this book. He is, in fact, one who has escaped the authors' net, possibly because he was one of the more comprehensive planners who was seeking to re-design London rather than one of the authors of a single impossible or merely ill-fated building.

This is the book of the exhibition (though considerably expanded) "London as it might have been" held at the Guildhall Art Gallery in 1975, and compiled by Ralph Hyde and John Fisher. Even the cover picture is identical, probably the most spectacular might-have-been, John Polard Seddon's and E. B. Lamb's Monumental Halls, Westminster, a massive complex tacked on to the east end of Westminster Abbey on the site of Abington Street, containing a 550-foot tower, 100 feet higher than the adjacent Victoria Tower. This was to be a suitable resting-place for the remains of national, or rather imperial heroes. It would clearly have provided more space for marble monuments to the dead, and busts of the living, than even its architects thought necessary, but probably would have had its ambulatory closed to the public because of the unfortunate penchant of Londoners for throwing themselves off any high building made available to them. This has been the spoiling of many splendid schemes for improving London, like the high-level walkway over Tower Bridge, or the viewing platform round the Duke of York's column.

The lost opportunities are most poignant when the splendid individual designs are considered: like Soane's House of Lords of 1794, or Goldicutt's design for the Nelson Monument. The authors particularly regret the suburban Boulton Crescent, while the bird's-eye-view of the Grand National Cemetery, a *jeu d'esprit* in Greco-Roman style occupying some 150 acres in either Kidbrooke or Primrose Hill, shows another suburban might-have-been. A number of the nineteenth-century schemes for the Palace of Westminster are illustrated, including Cockcroft's nonconforming classical design. There was no guarantee until the RIBA took the matter in hand at the end of the century, that the winner of the competition would be asked to design the building, and so Francis Fowke's design for the National History Museum, which won first prize in 1864, appears together with George Gilbert Scott's third prize-winner for the Foreign Office of 1857, in the French chateau style. By the time the County Hall competition was held in 1907, Ralph Knott, the winner, could expect to design the building, even against the well-connected Edwin Lutyens and E. A. Rickards, a specialist in town-hall design whose baroque tower might have proved a more exciting foil to Barry's Victoria Tower.

Of more concern to Londoners are the comprehensive projects for improving the city, and these include traffic schemes, now and improved bridges, and hygienic proposals for splendid cemeteries or for sewage treatment canals, both destined to enrich the promoters while benefiting the health of the capital. Some of these actually happened; the canals alongside the Thames for moving sewage by barge turned into the Ingersoll sewers later built by Sir Joseph Bazalgette, while there is still a sewer running from Knightsbridge to Hampstead known as the Sewage Mainline Company sewer. Not all



The proposed 1,150-ft Wembley Park Tower was selected in 1889 from sixty-eight designs (one a colony for aerial vegetarians). London's intended superior to the Eiffel Tower rose to only 150ft before money ran out in 1894; it was demolished in 1906-07. Reproduced from London: As it might have been by Felix Baker and Ralph Hyde (reviewed below).

the magnificent cemetery chapels were built, neither was Kendall's Gothic water-gate from the Grand Union Canal to Kensal Green. The cemetery promoters got together with the railway mania and built the Necropolis station near Waterloo from which deceased and mourners could entrain together for Brookwood. However, the main joint-stock cemeteries still exist in suburban London, though none was as magnificent as Francis Goodwin's scheme, which incorporated a strictly classical design with no less than four copies of the Tower of the Winds. Another solution to the interment problem was Thomas Willson's Pyramid, designed to provide burial spaces for over five million Londoners, rather over four times the population of the city at the time.

Of greater concern to living Londoners are the bridges, of which the most attractive perhaps is Sandby's Bridge of Magnificence near Somerset House, or Soane's Corinthian Triumphal Bridge of 1776, which preceded the rather pedestrian Lambeth Suspension Bridge of 1862. London's lack of bridges was a perennial problem, not only because in this it was inferior to Paris but because of the real damage done to commerce. The rebuilding of London Bridge in the early nineteenth century stimulated some ambitious solutions, including Thomas Telford's im-

possibly steep iron bridge, and Dancos's double bridge. This, like a later "duplex" scheme for Tower Bridge, was an attempt to double the crossing capacity. Ultimately the solution for Tower Bridge was a practical bascule bridge clothed in a fantastic cast-iron skin, now being partly replaced by fibre-glass.

The building of the embankment was a portmanteau scheme, defending valuable building land against high tides, providing space for sewers below, and for carriages and pedestrians above. The most elegant portrayal of this was by John Martin, though his scheme was not realized, and the authors point out a sinister resemblance between it and an apocalyptic fantasy also by Martin entitled "Pandemonium" - two most comprehensive versions were developed by Col Trench who added a railway to the original Thames Quay, a proposal at first rejected because of the threatened interests of the wharf-owners and Thames barge-masters. The Embankment did indeed transpire, but not in the graceful and homogeneous neo-classical envisaged by Thomas Allom. Like so many London schemes it founded on the provisions for legal acquisition of land, and on finance as much as on sheer practicality. The latter probably stifled most of the railways designed to run down the centre of the Thames like Paxton's

Great Victorian Way, or to cross London like the elevated railways in New York and Chicago. "Railway streets" were designed to run alongside first-floor windows like Nash's balconies in Regent Street, or like the Crystal Way as an extended "galleria" from Cheapside to Oxford Circus. Not to be outdone, the GLC prepared a monorail scheme for the centre of Regent Street in 1967.

On the whole London has probably benefited from the non-completion of the Holford proposals for the

redevelopment of the City, seductive though many of the perspectives are in his book on the subject. A number of the proposals ultimately carried through after the war had been put forward by architects and town planners in the 1930s, notably in the Bressey report of 1938, and in October 1942 the Royal Academy Planning Committee published a report seizing on the opportunity given by bombing. Of course, one of the solutions never considered for London was that carried out for Warsaw, the rebuilding behind replica façades of destroyed buildings, and it is interesting to consider whether a more conservative architectural profession less concerned with town planning, or even perhaps a less charming protagonist, would have served London better. Lord Holford's ability to handle committees was legendary, possibly greater than his capacity for dealing with tower-blocks adjacent to historic buildings.

Many of those ideas are very long-lived, and the authors remind us of the saga of Piccadilly Circus, turned into a major London problem by the destruction of Nash's circus in 1875, revived by the King Edward VII Square scheme of 1910, and a source of interminable wrangling ever since the war. The National Theatre was first mooted in 1848, originally sited in Bloomsbury; then a collaboration of G. B. Shaw and Edwin Lutyens produced a design for the site opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum, and only in the past decade has the theatre risen on the South Bank. Equally long-running is the proposal to improve the National Gallery, a matter which concerned the Prince Consort when planning the South Kensington purchase after the Great Exhibition; even now assessors are judging a competition for extension on the Hampton site in Trafalgar Square. Will this be another might have been?

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## En route for the Ineffable

Stewart R. Sutherland

DON CUPITT:  
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0 334 01815 3

When I suggest that this book will become all things to all men, I do not mean that Don Cupitt is trying to please us all with the milk and water of religious compromise; quite the reverse: each will disagree with it in his own way. The historian of ideas and the philosopher will find some of the author's bold diagnoses resting on, at best, hidden intellectual foundations. The *Neutestamentarier* and the theologian will wince at the selective use of elements of the Christian tradition, and in certain quarters of the Church the ecclesiastical tumbler will stand with axes greased ready for use. Such is the fate of the latter-day prophet. The gift of the forth-teller is to formulate and enunciate some central proposition about the age that is ignored or misunderstood by the various sections whose interests have gone into the building of the conventional wisdom. In that sense of the word, Mr Cupitt quite firmly fits the mould of "prophet", and this book offers his spiritual diagnosis of our times. The perennial difficulty of the implied role is that only posterity can finally distinguish between reality and replica. A reviewer, however, must attempt an interim assessment.

Cupitt writes, without any qualms, of "modern experience" and of "religious thought in modern times". He believes that the former has placed very radical constraints on the latter. There are various elements which have contributed to the present form of "modern experience", and they include the developments of Kantian critical philosophy and the endorsement by (some) contemporary philosophers of a theory of knowledge which is relativist in character. The history of religions, he argues, has

shown us that the patterns and practices of religious belief have been developed under cultural determinants and that creeds offer symbolic rather than descriptive utterances. The effect of the application of the techniques of biblical criticism to the Christian scriptures has been debilitating and just as we are no longer subject to the myth of the availability of "absolute knowledge", so too have the foundations of the old moral order collapsed.

Of course if all this is true then the implications for religion, including Christianity, are devastating, and Cupitt legitimately poses the question whether we live in an age which will see the end of religion, the end of Christian belief. His response is to argue for a radical change in our understanding of religious belief. Following the abandonment of the idea of an objectively existing, supernatural God in his *Taking Leave of God*, Cupitt lays theology which talks in descriptive and metaphysical terms about God. We are confronted by the necessity for a transition which will allow us to realize that our task is to find faith, and to find it "on the far side of the loss of faith".

A religious metaphor which could have been given a more central place in this book is that of pilgrimage. Cupitt characterizes the goal in three different ways. The first and best developed of these draws on a number of contemporary writings, including his own *Taking Leave of God*: it is the idea of an inner spirituality which eschews an objectively existing God and is characterized as the "inward" practice of religion "for its own sake". Central to this, and leading to the second image of the goal of spiritual growth, is an ethic of the whole this ethic is individual rather than social in character, but the intention is clearly to offer a picture of the goal in terms of the contours of a possible form of sociality. In fact the most serious weakness

of the book is that it does not tackle adequately the problems of translating an individualistic, albeit spiritual, ethic into one which can be the basis of social and political structures.

What differentiates these aims from secular high-mindedness comes in the third characterization of the goal - "the ineffable". It is at this point that it becomes quite clear that someone has forgotten to tie a knot at the end of the thread with which Cupitt has been stitching together the religious habit of the modern spiritual pilgrim. The consequence is that, unlike the emperor's in the story, the new suit of clothes is the most embarrassing moments. We are being asked to venture forth on a pilgrimage which involves abandoning all fixed points. In order that, the far side of nihilism, beyond the void and having gone through cultural and personal loss of faith, we might arrive at something whose authenticity is marked by "the vastness and purity of the ineffable". We are told that "the Void can become the ineffable and can arouse (non-cognitive) worship". We are not invited to view the ineffable as a possible object of belief or knowledge, but we are asked to believe that despite "modern experience" there is a state of soul which sees the world in these terms. Now either we are being asked to believe that ultimately this is how the world is - tolerant of religious values and meaning - or certain states of spiritual being. In which case, types of metaphysical or ontological commitment discarded in the opening chapters of the book are (not surprisingly) found necessary to characterize the proposed alternative view of the nature of religious faith.

In fact this is less damaging than might first appear for I believe that Cupitt can make the polemical religious and theological points which he wishes to make without nullifying his philosophical colours to the controversial mast of relativism. But it



# The very tail of the world

Charles Causley

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242pp. £3.75.  
Anthony Mott, The Cornish Library,  
St Saviour's Hall, London, W4  
3BU.  
0 907746 01 2

"Must of the inhabitants can speak no word of Cornish," wrote Richard Carew in his 1612 *Survey of Cornwall*, "but very few are ignorant of the English; and yet some so affect their own as to n stranger they will not speak it, for if meeting them by chance you inquire the way or any such matter, your answer shall be: *Mez e novisidh c'hwazavzneck*, 'I can speak no Saxonese'."

Fortunately for the general reader, most Cornish writers from Carew through Sidney Godolphin, O. The *White Horse* have chosen to address themselves to their readers in English, as do the four authors Anthony Mott has chosen to introduce his newly established Cornish Library series. J. C. Trewin, Anne Treneer and A. L. Rowse are all Cornish-born; but native attitudes unsurprisingly, still die hard. I well remember Leslie Rowse saying, on discovering that my father came from Devonshire, "Ah, then you're like O. Not one of us!" Nor, by this standard, only one so, is Grigson, who once remarked in a similar context that a cat may have kittens in the oven but the result isn't buns.

Grigson is one of an East Anglian person's seven children born in the vicarage, baptised in the church and brought up in Peelynt, an "anglicized" village in south-west Cornwall. He describes his *Freedom of the Parish*, first published in 1954, as "chiefly an act of loyalty or piety to my first biological territory". It is a result of this slightly chilling "biological" view that in the end, I think, this meticulously researched and beautifully (if somewhat aridly) written book falls. One is led to see the village, somehow, as little more than a skinned rabbit pinned to a board; as a curious plant, possibly with an unpleasant odour, wilting under the too-bright eye of the microscope.

In a day split by chasma of class as strong as granite, the parish's son, however much he may have wished it otherwise, was inevitably a natural "outsider": one of "them" to his fellow-villagers. The same fate befell the child of the schoolmaster from "up the country". Life is a representation, in miniature, of alien authority, of infiltration, of the enemy from across the Tamar.

What Grigson does, and does well, is to map the evolution of a few acres of Cornish territory patently very dear to him: its historical and literary associations, the nature of its half-concealed plant and animal life. But the view of the parish remains, inflexibly steady, that from the window of a decaying vicarage, dry with rot, before the vicar's driven by the expense of maintenance and heating to occupy a smaller home in the village. Grigson, rightly, sees this as a threat to the parish's life, as an inevitable, and as an important factor in the gradual destruction of the balance of village life. It was part of the historical process grimly continued in the 1950s and 1960s with the closure of the village schools.

Grigson on the past is strong, sure, evocative. But as the book proceeds, the human characters that have peopled his pages grow fewer in number, retreat from view. The story

ends, rather lamely, with little sense of the village's living present in the 1950s. A parish is, after all, a people. It is as though the inhabitants, faced by the parish's "squeaky" son, quietly resumed their traditional roles as members of an essentially secret grouping. For all his efforts, Grigson earns the freedom of the parish, but not of the parishioners.

As the schoolmaster's daughter, and a Cornish schoolmaster's at that, Anne Treneer gets a little closer to the heart of a community. All the time, the shadow of the school house falls across her relationships outside her warm, secure, hothouse home at Gorrin and Caerhays. *School House in the Wind* appeared originally in 1944, and is Anne Treneer's account of her childhood in two parishes in South Cornwall at the turn of the century. It fixes, as if in amber, her view of the life and work of a vanished, hierarchical society in what a Bishop of Exeter in 1552 called "the very tail of the world".

Anne Treneer's account is, on the whole, a comfortable one. She has little or nothing to say, for example, of the dark underside of village life in a hure county thrust (the phrase is Carew's) "into the sea and besieged by ocean", but also still besieged by poverty, squalor, hunger, lack of privacy, among the majority of its inhabitants. The opportunity of presenting a fully-rounded portrait of a peculiarly remote body is missed.

What is here is splendid: a warmly affectionate and entertaining jaunt through childhood and the seasons, festivals and holidays of the old Cornish year. The eye is sharp, the touch light, the text by no means entirely lacking in muscle. But the range of vision is strangely limited. Nevertheless, she delivers many telling jobs, particularly on the subject of education. "Lozy teachers use their wits and dodge", she declares at one point, "(but) a lezy schoolmaster does less harm than a ruthlessly ambitious and competitive one".

The Lizard of J. C. Trewin's title is the mysterious peninsula south of Helston: a middle of fuschia, wall-flowers and tamarisk, serpentine sheds, the wall post-box bearing the Edward the seventh cipher, the famous light lifting at night "his shining spear", the sea "the dragon-green, the luminous", the washing the coloured rocks. Trewin makes absolutely no pretence of writing a formal autobiography. His text, written and first published in the late 1940s, is densely composed, richly allusive and associative, moves constantly from present to past to present again.

His father was a master-miner with whom his mother, a farmer's daughter from St Anthony-in-Meneague, frequently sailed: "she liked the sea because she could get through so much sewing". It was, after all, a bookish household and one filled with pictures of his mother "in a Buenos Aires park, on shore at Givernon or Givernon, on the Peak in Madeira". It is on or on the text, from many such clues, how a child's creative imagination was stimulated and heightened, a sense developed of worlds as yet unrealized but clearly realizable, despite a kind of near-solitary confinement at the southernmost tip of Britain. Trewin's sense of atmosphere, of the ambience of a place is strong: as in his marvelous description of Pinstel Meadow, below which 200 were lost when a transport carrying 700 men which was driven ashore in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Later, the story wanders across the border to pre-1939 Plymouth and the world of Journalism, even to London. Lady A. Mott makes a swift appearance, "hecklers" who, "considered her a simple, forgetful, shuffling, before the faded lightning of her retorts". But it is always in Old Lizard Hoed, and its associations, that Trewin, to a virtuoso performance by no acute yet gentle essayist, returns.

Rowse, on the other hand, has no need of return; for in the strongest imaginative sense he seems never for a second to have been away from the county. His *A Cornish Childhood* rises as freshly and convincingly from the page as when it was first pub-

lished forty years ago. His paternal grandfather was a smallholder and tin-miner who died of phthisis; his father a clay-worker. The young Rowse found himself all but trapped in the cage of a remote community, the First World War still to come, in which one was expected to know one's "place" and keep it. *A Cornish Childhood* is the deeply affecting account of a working-class boy's struggle to realize, through an Oxford scholarship and all that it afforded, his true potential. Given Rowse's grindingly limited background and the squalid lack of educational opportunities of those days, it seems a miracle that he succeeded. But this is not to take into account Rowse's extraordinary resilience of mind and imagination, even as a boy, and his daunting independence and capacity for hard work.

The personal story is merely a central thread. The autobiography is also the history, told from within, of a mid-Cornish village and its people: the routine of life "still unbroken, though perhaps like an old grand-father clock... winding down slowly, imperceptibly, to a stop". Rowse, whose early curiosity about his environment was interpreted disapprovingly as "inquisitiveness", also offers, quite unblurred by sentimentality, a whole gallery of Cornish portraits, not one of which appears in the loathsome and patronizing guise of a "character". Among the finest are those of his own parents: in particular, of his shy, deaf, stiffly reserved father.

Early in the book, Rowse, speaking of parish rivalries, observes cheerfully that the principle of hating your next-door neighbour held good all over Cornwall, and that "there never was a greater joke than 'One never was a Cornishman' and 'All' as the Cornish people, like all Celts, are notoriously individualist and incapable of co-operating". As far as writing and writers are concerned, this seems to me to do nothing but sugar well for the quality and interest of Anthony Mott's establishment of a list devoted to books on Cornwall and the Cornish.

## Life without work

Phyllis Willmott

JEREMY SEABROOK:

Unemployment  
226pp. Quiret £8.95.  
0 7043 2325 7

Jeremy Seabrook's latest book is not, as the title would suggest, just about unemployment. It is also about poverty and work. But, above all, it is an agonized lament for a lost "working class" in which men stood tall in their hob-nailed boots and women loved their neighbours as themselves. In the author's words, it is about "what the decay of work and the changed function of work and working class means for people" today. The people are those whom Seabrook met when, emulating Orwell, he travelled round Britain to places like Birmingham, Sunderland and Bolton where unemployment is high. He talked to people in pubs, at job-centres and in shopping precincts; he observed the ways of life of some of the families whose homes he visited or stayed at briefly as a lodger.

Moving from place to place geographically, the book also moves backwards and forwards in time, juxtaposing memories of life in the 1930s with the actuality of life in the 1980s. From the varying length of the accounts it seems that the author has used a mixture of "overheard" conversations through casual encounters and lengthy tape-recorded interviews in people's homes. There are memories of elderly people's experience of life, work and unemployment in the past and accounts of younger people's present or recent lives. Some of the stories are touching, others harrowing or inspiring, but the dominant "voice" is not that of the "people" but of Mr Seabrook.

Seabrook would interpret this memory of childhood very differently from others. Some might be more impressed by the misery of the pa-



Henry Jenner, 1848-1934, the "Father of the Cornish Language Revival" and the first Grand Bard of Cornwall. The picture is taken from the Cornish Language and its Literature by P. Berresford Ellis (230pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £4.95. 0 7100 9070 6) which has recently been reissued in paperback.

Although valuing what people say, the author thinks he knows better than they do what they really mean: "Much of what working-class people say is through metaphor and image: they feel the pain of what is done to them, but don't always find it easy to express directly... Even when people speak for themselves, the context in which they do so often falsifies the sense of what they mean".

One can see such an approach as at worst patronizing and at best well-intentioned if misguided. Either way it provides a means of ignoring what people say when it does not fit in with the author's two main themes. The first of these is that in the 1930s the hardships of work, unemployment and poverty were, through a kind of epic stoicism and hence dignity, whereas today there is no thing but emptiness and despair. The second is that the main function of work in meaningful (however grudgingly hard) occupations, is being taken away with disastrous loss to its solidarity and its capacity to care.

One can only too readily take from the past what one chooses. Consider, for example, this quotation from an old man in Sunderland: "Oh we suffered all right. As a lad, I was up at six o'clock on Saturday mornings to go and stand in the cakes for the twopenny of stala my father weep at the wages he had to offer my mother... And she seemed to lose a child a year as well. But you had too much to do to be unhappy; and you had a whole street full of friends."

Seabrook would interpret this memory of childhood very differently from others. Some might be more impressed by the misery of the pa-

rents - particularly Mam - inherent in the memory than of the child's happy play in the streets.

In any case, the gains to be derived from adversity need more careful assessment than Seabrook gives them. The companionship of men in the trenches in the First World War, to take another example from the past outside the scope of this book, may have made the impossible endurable but does anyone believe that the companionship justified the cost?

Similarly, Seabrook seems to be arguing that men cannot live in dignity without being lifetime conscripts to the army of workers. Unemployed man he saw had a different opinion: "I didn't work for the love of it. I wish I didn't have to. I don't want people telling me I need work" (that is, as a paid employee) "for dignity. I'm a person in my own right without work. You don't cease contributing to society if you don't work."

There is plenty of evidence, incidentally, from contemporary records that the women of the past resented their plight. Suffering yearly pregnancies, starving themselves to feed their children, working themselves to early graves in homes without equipment or comfort, they had few illusions about the advantages of hardship and poverty.

Today, fortunately, men's choices are no longer confined to body-breaking labour or starving, even though unemployment still means poverty and loss of self-esteem for most of those who fall into it. But hankering after the miserable 1930s is no answer. It is a poor prospect not just for the working class but for all of humanity if it is only by enduring adversity that worthwhile values such as solidarity, companionship, frugality and the capacity for caring can develop.

## POETRY

BONNIE COSTELLO:

Marianne Moore: Imaginary Possessions  
281pp. Harvard University Press.  
£12.95.  
0 674 54848 5

Ten years after her death, Marianne Moore tends to be respected at a distance rather than read and imitated. Partly this is a matter (as it so often is) of availability: English readers of *Marianne Moore: Imaginary Possessions*, which is easily the most comprehensive study of Moore yet to appear, will need to possess, or to track down, the *Collected Poems of 1951* or the *Complete Poems of 1967*, both long out of print. Yet Moore was never less than herself in anything she wrote, and the half dozen well-anthologized poems are widely available, demonstrating in unmistakable detail what she was about. Moreover, her practice of counting the syllables and piling them up dexterously into any kind of stanzaic structure, unassuming or elaborate, is there for anyone to follow and adapt to their own uses. Moore might have continued to inspire both the mainstream (Auden had come to admire her) and the modernists (William Carlos Williams was a staunch advocate); but she does not. Her brilliant ornateness is not emulated, though there are debts to it in the work of a James Merrill or a John Ashbery; and her syllables are only employed rather tentatively. In all this there is a reluctance that amounts to mistrust.

Randall Jarrell, writing in 1952, understood the danger when he felt impelled to defend Marianne Moore against the charge of being "a sort of museum poet". She was after all - in Bonnie Costello's phrase - "a kleptomane-of-the-mind", a collage artist assembling other people's material (including other people's junk) into

her own astonishing exhibits. Any-one in search of a genuine speaking voice - or a true voice of feeling - runs up against the paradox that the creator of "The Jerboa" and "The Plumet Basilisk" (animals fascinating to her for their free elusiveness) is among the most calculating, the least spontaneous of poets. The force of her exuberant originality congeals into beautiful and inscrutable shapes which are not to be imitated, a process aided by her habit of taking ideas mostly from art (or articles, in newspapers or magazines, or "business documents and school-books") instead of from life. In "The Frigate Pelican" the "unconfessed" bird (compared to the impassioned but reticent Handel) "hides / in the height and in the majestic / display of his art." Later poets have voted with their typewriters for the view that there was more display than substance in Moore's art, that the point was invariably well hidden if indeed it existed at all.

Poems which - again in Bonnie Costello's words - offer "trials of associations which conduct the reader to the writer, their source", have gone on leaving the reader wondering what is to be found out at the end of the quest. And yet Marianne Moore does repay attention, and for much more than her skills of prestidigitational fixing so much bizarre and unlikely material into her glittering syllabic structures. In "The Steeple-Jack" or "Nine Nectarines" she contradicts (before it was invented) the notion that poems about other works of art are necessarily incestuous, or snobbish, or timid; and she does it by veering away from the source of inspiration into her own kind of crazy eloquence. These are poems which never lean on their subjects but weave idiosyncratic variations on moral or aesthetic themes hit upon in the originals. In a wider way, Moore almost contrives to prove that the natural may, in any

case, best be appreciated through the artificial. Her kaleidoscopic lists and sets of allusions are quintessentially American, but rather like an inversion of the America of Whitman or Hart Crane. She manages to suggest that the world of objects can most effectively be understood by filtering it through a sensibility nourished on secondary sources of information, and voracious for anything that this indoor world can supply.

If art and nature regrettably cannot ("In the Days of Prismatic Colour") be one and the same, it is perfectly legitimate for art to come to our assistance in comprehending nature. Moore's way of demonstrating this adds up to far more than mere show-case virtuosity; her poetry presents a ravishingly ingenious argument for arriving at the truth about the real world through the medium of the imagination. A glacier may well be more like "an octopus of ice" possessing "relentless accuracy" and "a capacity for fact". First conjure up your imaginary gardens, then - the true linguist - you can spot the "real truths" in them. A full elucidation and appreciation of this poetry, which is some of the truest of our time, was long overdue.

In her book Professor Costello has at last tried "to begin integrating critical analysis and scholarly research", and *Imaginary Possessions* is a substantial and impressive start on this huge undertaking. Moore's private pursuit of the real leads was through the point of obsession. The immense archive at the Rosenbach Foundation in Philadelphia contains bulky notebooks of private conversations, hosts of letters, files of cuttings and pictures, a dozen commonplace books drawing on any and every kind of reading, from fashion to zoology. Moore left all of it carefully ordered, and much of it scrupulously indexed. Faced with this meticulous labyrinth of material, and with a poet who so mercilessly re-

vised her own canon (in one extraordinary instance she slashed her most famous poem, "Poetry", from thirty lines to three between the *Collected* and the *Complete* editions) it is no wonder that both biographer and critic have been slow to give a definitive account of her life and work.

To find a path through the maze Bonnie Costello takes her texts from Moore herself, principally her equal insistence on "sincerity" and "gusto", terms which are idiosyncratically defined ("gusto" is near to Hazlitt's "power or passion defining any object", but Costello also discerns "a feeling of pleasure accompanying bafflement"). These are useful as signposts in such colourfully mysterious terrain; but the risk accompanying the method is of allowing this most elusive of poets to be the exclusive guide to her own writings. One result of this is a labyrinthine and unconvincing prose register which, not surprisingly, lacks the dazzle of Moore's own style. *Imaginary Possessions* is a difficult book about a difficult poet. Professor Costello never drives a stentor-roller in the manner setrized in Moore's squib cast at absolutist critics ("As for butterflies, I can hardly conceive / of one's attending upon you"); but she does resort to a kind of critical rhetoric which hovers perpetually above the poems in a haze of abstruse paradoxes, making it necessary to work hard for the insights she has to offer.

Once the reader has penetrated this dense and reiterative critical style, the close study of Moore's best poems is rewarding indeed: light is shed on the problems of meaning Moore's frequent ambivalences, and on the significance for the poet's conclusion illuminated by citation of materials in the Rosenbach collection. The stages in Moore's development, from the early, purely imagist

style to the late period when she settled disappointingly for a *New Yorker*-ish respectability, with poems about Yul Brynner and baseball, are clearly charted; and some of the poet's recurring preoccupations - with the visual arts, with the question of form in relation to message, with the conflict between tension and fluency - are defined and explored. The author of "To a Snail" may never convince her most ardent admirers that her ideal in verse is something to do with that creature's "compression" and "modesty", but Bonnie Costello has wrestled with the angelic paradoxes in this poetry for them, and celebrated Marianne Moore's achievement with erudition and sympathy.

The April issue of *Akros* (25 Johns Road, Radcliffe-on-Trent, Nottingham NG12 2GW. £1.10), edited by Duncan Glen is a special number devoted to American poetry. Its contributors include John Osborne on the development of contemporary American poetry and on the Black Mountain School, David Murray on Ezra Pound, Jeffrey Wainwright on William Carlos Williams's lyric poetry, Eric Homberger on the Objectivists, Eric Mottram on Charles Olson, Geoffrey Thurely on Beat poets, Ian Gregor on New York poets and Peter Eas on ethnopoetics. Duncan Glen provides a number of "Poems to American Poets". In his "Editor's Notes" he writes about the "line" of American poetry discussed in this issue: "Obviously it is the line of which Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams are the father figures, although perhaps we should have started with Whitman; but one issue cannot do everything. An anthology *Akros Verse 1965-1982* will be sent free to the subscribers of the next issue of the magazine which will have a new letterpress format. (£2.10. from Akros Publications, otherwise £2.30.)

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# Romanticism and after

Alec Nove

MICHEL HEILLER and  
ALEKSANDR NEKRICH:

1. *L'Utopie au pouvoir: Histoire de l'URSS de 1917 à nos jours*  
658pp. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.  
2 7021 0432 0

Many histories of the Soviet Union have been published in the West, but *L'Utopie au pouvoir* is the first scholarly general work by Soviet émigré historians. Nekrich is known for his 1946 *Utopie* (which got him into serious trouble in the Soviet Union), as well as for *The Punished Peoples* (on Stalin's deportations of Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Chechens, etc.). Heller has had a book published on literature and the labour camps. In the present volume the authors offer no sensational revelations, and much of the evidence on which they draw is also available to Western scholars. None the less their training and one-time occupation as Soviet historians adds an individual (and valuable) flavour to their narrative, while their present situation as émigrés naturally adds colour to the presentation. For them, as for Solzhenitsyn, Bnlsheviski is a sort of unnatural break in Russian history, despite superficial elements of continuity. They stress the continuity of Bolshevism itself from Lenin through Stalin to Brezhnev, in respect of its aims at home and in its foreign policy, though they make clear that the pathological excesses of Stalinist terror are a thing of the past.

*L'Utopie au pouvoir* contains some chapters that are particularly successful. One such is the analysis of Soviet policy in the period leading up to the Nazi-Soviet pact and to the German attack on the Soviet Union. Relations with the West, both at the time of Munich and of the Yalta and

Potsdam conferences, are fully and fairly presented, and so is the genesis of the Cold War. There is a clear and helpful account of the politics of Stalin's last years, and a subtle and many-sided picture of the Khrushchev period, with all its contradictions. Khrushchev meant well, learnt some bitter lessons from the evil period through which he had lived, and to which he had himself contributed. But his methods were often confused, irrational and disorganizing. "He tried to cross the precipice in two leaps". He "drilled windows in the iron curtain but built the Berlin wall". As Heller and Nekrich correctly note, his successors aimed above all at stability, and the maintenance of the privileges and power of the ruling oligarchy.

Here and there one can take issue with the authors' interpretations. Thus there is a contradiction in their treatment of the arithmetic of the great terror. Some analysts take the view that the largest number of victims was among the peasants (in 1930-33), and that the greater majority of the years 1936-38 was due to the fact that so many intellectuals, political figures and army officers were arrested in those years. Others assign the largest number of arrests to 1936-38. At one point Heller and Nekrich lend support to the first of these interpretations but later they appear to favour the second. There are also a few inaccuracies. As a former student of Harold Laski, I cannot believe that he ever said that "never in history had Man attained such perfection as the Soviets". There is an odd geographical muddle, in discussing the Soviet command's expectations attack, and a clear error in the figure for the grain harvest in Kazakhstan in 1956. Some of the references choose to use the letter "X" to designate the Russian "kh", and in fact in

successive pages we have Khrushchev, Khrushchev and Khrushchev. But these are exceptions, in a well-documented and clearly argued volume, of undoubted value for the Western reader.

Details apart, the whole interpretation raises some vitally important issues of principle. One of these is exemplified in the title of the work. Heller and Nekrich amply and ably demonstrate the role of utopian thought in the period of war communism, when indeed the contradictions and reality have great explanatory power. But surely any surviving utopians were slaughtered by Stalin's execution squads in the 1930s, and it is hard to see anything remotely utopian in the thought-processes and modus operandi of the present rulers of the Soviet Union - and still less in their likely successors. Indeed, the need to kill the bulk of Lenin's "old guard" lends some support to those

who maintain that Stalin was not, after all, the natural heir to Lenin - though undeniably his rise was facilitated by some key elements of Lenin's theories and practices. The Soviet social system, with (very proper) emphasis on hierarchy, establishment (*homenklatura*) and entrenched privilege, underlines the contrast with the ideas of the original revolutionary romantics, including Lenin.

Heller and Nekrich have scant sympathy with, or interest in, the various communist positions or deviations, and the policy differences which were debated in the 1920s are treated rather perfunctorily, as are the economic circumstances which led to what they call "la mort de la NEP". The economic problems of the Khrushchev period receive much more thorough analysis. One may also question their treatment of Western policies in relation to the

situation today: East-West trade is regarded as "aid", and therefore short-sighted, as if there were not some economic advantage also to the West. Nor does it follow that because "80 per cent of Soviet production of polyethylene and 75 per cent of mineral fertilizer and 70 per cent of chemicals" are produced by Western machinery that the West thereby helps the Soviet Union develop chemical and biological weapons.

However, it would be quite wrong to end on a carping note. I know of no better general textbook which may be recommended to students of the period, one which provides so much detail and so much of the flavour of Soviet life in the past sixty-five years. To compensate for the occasional sketchiness of the economic data there are some fascinating chapters devoted to literature and culture, foreign affairs and politics. An English translation would be very desirable.

## Dawning diversity

Alex Pravda

STEPHEN FISCHER-GALATI  
(Editor):

Eastern Europe in the 1980s  
291pp. Croom Helm. £15.95.  
0 7099 1005 3

It is a pity that editors and publishers persist in anticipating the future in the titles of books. *Eastern Europe in the 1980s* is, in fact, about developments in the region in the 1970s. The title is all the more misleading in that the book takes no account of the Polish "Summer of 1980", notwithstanding the impression to the contrary given by the publisher's blurb. If the volume has any particular focus it is Yugoslavia and the regional order after Tito.

None of this seriously detracts, however, from the work's value as a collection of informative surveys of developments during the 1970s. These comprise chapters on industry (George R. Felwel); agriculture (Levi A. Fischer); trade (Eleftherios N. Botsas); domestic politics (Trond Gilberg); relations with the Communist world (Robin Allison Remington); and the non-Communist world (Daniel N. Nelson). Education (Roy E. Haath); and culture (Joseph Held). Two major gaps are social development, an area of crucial importance in the 1970s. By and large the contributors offer clear, concise and reasonably comprehensive accounts of their particular sphere; some, such as that by Nelson, are models of condensation. The thematic approach makes a welcome change from the country-by-country structure typical of surveys of Eastern Europe. The book, however,

shares two weaknesses commonly found in volumes of this kind.

First, chapters are pitched at different levels of generality and are therefore suited to different audiences. The essays on "Agriculture and Rural Development" and "Industrialization", for example, are relatively specialized and assume some basic knowledge, whereas those on domestic and international politics include introductory material and stand as self-contained studies. Second, there is a clear need for an introduction that would set the thematic chapters into context and indicate how the developments they discuss interrelate; this is not provided either by the editor's contributions or by Vucinich's essay on "Major Trends in Eastern Europe". The Vucinich chapter includes an interesting discussion of ethnic problems, together with accounts of developments on the ideological, constitutional, religious and dissidence fronts, but these are not woven into any coherent assessment of trends.

A clearer picture of regional trends emerges from Gilberg's long essay on "The Political Order", which is the best in the book. After setting out the features shaped by the East European states - "elements of commonality" - Gilberg examines "factors of diversification", under which heading he discusses problems and the ways in which regimes react to them. The problems he identifies, all too briefly in some cases, are familiar ones: the growing importance of expertise; more demanding cultural and political nationalism. More interesting is Gilberg's analysis of the responses by the regimes. These he divides into three basic types: the "orthodox" approach

adopted in Romania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, involving an expansion of organizational and ideological controls; the "liberal" response - characteristic of Kádár's Hungary and Giersek's Poland - which allows for considerable autonomy within an overall framework of the Party's political monopoly; and, lastly, the "interim" approach typified by East Germany's combination of increased control in the ideological and political spheres with "considerable" autonomy for economic planners and managers. As is so often the case with East Germany, the factors that have made possible such a combination are left vague. Unclear also, in what is generally an illuminating discussion, is Gilberg's use of the notion of "regime profile" - his main yardstick for locating governments along the orthodox-liberal continuum. He employs the term rather loosely as a synonym for a bundle of variables that includes centralization, control, Party inflexibility, ideological orthodoxy and repression of dissent. If the concept is to realize its potential, the criteria for describing a régime's profile as high, middling or low must be carefully defined. Care, too, should be taken when including régimes under the same heading to distinguish between degrees of central control and autonomy and between different methods of political management. Gilberg, in fact, goes out of his way to stress the contrasts between Kádár's and Giersek's "liberal" responses to the social and political pluralism which he envisages as growing in strength through the 1980s.

How East European régimes deal with such pluralism does not depend on domestic considerations alone. One of the themes running through the volume is the continued centrality to these countries' development of external - ie Soviet - constraints. Indeed, the editor goes as far as to describe the course of the region's evolution as "a function of Soviet interests and concerns", which he sees as enshrined during the 1970s and unlikely to change in the near future. The Polish crisis, however, has highlighted the flexibility of Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe. It has underlined the danger of laying down hard-and-fast generalizations about Soviet interests and thresholds of tolerance. What Moscow will tolerate in Eastern Europe depends, to a large extent, on domestic and international conditions as well as on Soviet resources. Remington is surely right when she suggests that Moscow's ability to contain a deteriorating situation in Eastern Europe has weakened and will continue to do so. Given this, plus the burgeoning social, ideological and national diversity which many of the chapters stress, the editor's conclusion that "the 1980s in Eastern Europe should be worse than the 1970s but better than the 1990s" seems unduly pessimistic. While economic conditions will probably continue to deteriorate in the short term, politically the medium and long-term outlook is brighter than at any time since the death of Stalin.

## Treasure

How the word shifts  
Heavy and comforting  
From side to side  
In my memory now.

I lift it, weigh its worth,  
This washed glitter kept  
From other eyes in a box.  
I keep it shut and tip

Its voluptuous punch  
Like a cat on my lap.  
Opeened, it escapes  
To worthlessness.

In case it is only stones  
I keep it shut inside  
These lines, tightening the grip  
Of memory. O value, value.

Patrick Hare

FICTION

## The elegance of control

Galen Strawson

ANITA BROOKNER:

Providence  
183pp. Cape. £6.95.  
0 224 01976 7

Louise began as a seamstress in the rue St Denis. She married a Russian architect and moved to London, ending up as a dress designer with her own salon in Grosvenor Street. She was tough, she worked hard, "she was clever, she was knowing, she was fast". But she never understood the country of her adoption. "Come, she would say, with a glint in her eye... come, ma fille, tell me about England."

But Kitty Maule is in no position to tell her French grandmother about England, though born and raised there like her mother before her. Foreignness is fixed in her, preserved by caution and a sense of not knowing the rules, manifest in the formality of her syntax and her excessively careful diction. She sees, by virtue of her residual foreignness, things that the natural native does not see; but she does not understand the country. She loves it, but for the wrong reasons: through a faded image and a false ideal.

Her English father died before she was born, killed in the Second World War; it is his faded photograph that she has made "her image of England", while her "ideal of England" is Maurice Bishop, Professor of Medieval History at the small but richly endowed provincial university where she has a research appointment. She loves him, he is for a time her lover; but he, though obviously, loves only himself. He is vague, inspired-beautiful, charming, clever; a true and unaffected aesthete, a

Catholic of effortless, unshakable, gently mystical faith. He entrances audiences at the university (though not the Royal Society) with his lectures on English "eschatology" - each one a "series of moving but inaccurate insights (with slides)". Kitty adores him - one so pure, so noble, so superior, so childlike in his faith.

But she doesn't understand him. The seeming blindness of this master of the "mild, distancing smile" is founded in absolute self-absorption. His self-indulgence is beyond mere immorality: total, irremediable, unapproachable. It takes on all the lineaments of mild beatitude.

Anita Brookner renders this exquisite monster with considerable skill. But his principal fictional function seems to be simply to illuminate the nature and extent of Kitty's misapprehension of England - her reason perverted by her passion, her anxiety to belong. For *Providence* is a portrait before it is a people's story. It does not really create a world, it studies a personality. The plot is above all a way of adding detail to the central portrait. Kitty does not live it; it constructs her.

She works on Romanticism - and seeks to emulate what she finds in it: Romanticism, with its Stoic elements, the "assumption of effortlessness", the dandyism of great endeavour combined with a gracious ease of manner. She holds a plausible but uncomfortable and inconclusive seminar on Constant's *Adolphe*. She is working on her first proper lecture, on aspects of the Romantic Tradition. She has some good thoughts on the subject, and some less good ones.

The lecture promises to be a passport to a permanent post. Maurice, momentarily enthusiastic, hits on the

idea of a celebratory dinner. Kitty lives for the dinner, expecting, against the evidence, that it will be the occasion of the public confirmation of their relationship - though they are no longer lovers. She spends the hot summer days of drought dragged with anticipation, working on her lecture, dressing in cautious fits and starts, of excellence, success, fulfillment, of character-revolution, of coming home at last; stumbling meanwhile through prolonged passages of torpid, bitty, unconvicted self-examination.

These saccadic, Sargasso-like episodes are very well conveyed. And the point about her is that she is a spinster in love bound for academe and "an easy life doing difficult things", is finely and richly characterized, with her starting, stalling, over-intellectual sensibility, immune to beauty, and her occasional, almost formal lapses into sentimentality. Yet she fails to come completely to life, surrounded though she is by some marvellously drawn minor characters. She remains something of a novelist's laboratory, a repository of disparate states of consciousness. Part of the point about her is that she is like that; but she still fails, somehow, to attain to reality - even as a woman whose own sense of herself is of someone who fails to attain to reality.

Perhaps this is partly because her love for Maurice is too incredible, revealing a fundamental lack of moral sense that is hard to reconcile with her intellectual gifts and literary-psychological acuity. Or perhaps it is because she has to contend against the rather trackless construction of the book, a narrative vexed by slipshod that fails to maintain the development that it promises and needs. Some of the time this structural inconsequence helps to dramatize Kitty's own inconducive nature. But on

the whole it hinders rather than enhances our perception of her.

The lecture is a great success, the day of the dinner party arrives. The clairvoyant Kitty has visited with her flighty, *pauvre de luxe* neighbour has forsworn a wedding for Maurice. But it is not her own. She has not understood; she lacked the information. The shock of Kitty's shock reactivates previous episodes in the book, which return as commentary. The autobiographicality of her seminar on *Adolphe* - in which she makes the point that in the Romantic period "all creative endeavour becomes permeated with the author's own still, 'Romantic love can lead to disaster' - becomes clearer. "Romantic love can lead to disaster" to chastity. Or indeed ultimate, is total, the control remains. This is very elegant, very important. She speaks for herself - half aware that she does so.

But Kitty's control is nevertheless quite unlike *Adolphe's*. She lacks entirely his ruthless self-understanding. *Adolphe-Constant* remains in control, albeit unproductively, while borne up on the full flood of life. Kitty's control, on the other hand, is achieved by retraction, by retreat from life. And her despair, unlike *Adolphe-Constant's*, is not at all the despair of wasted life. A future of careful, creative desiccation impends - a fate the opposite of Constant's own.

There is a great deal to admire in *Providence*; it has strong, unusual undercurrents of charm. It is the organization of the full-scale narrative canvases that shows some weakness. But the full length portrait study remains impressive in its detail, despite a sense of over-academic endeavour; while there is mastery in the vignette, and a certain quick-eyed brilliance in the rapid sketch.

## Demons revealed

Thomas Sutcliffe

CLIVE SINCLAIR:

Bed Bugs  
109 pp. Allison and Busby. £6.95.  
0 85031 454 2

There is an Isaac Bashevis Singer story in which the aged narrator, half-way through a tale about a familiar domestic spirit, rebukes her sceptical listeners by saying: "Things like that happened, now the world is so corrupted that the demons keep hidden." That is not just a good Jewish joke about the shroud moral conservatism of demons (their livelihood, after all, depends on it) but also an acknowledgment that if we are craven about exposing ourselves to accusations of credulity and superstition then we risk losing all sense of the things that stand above us. The remark also has something to say about the conviction of the storyteller and her commitment to her story.

These issues - what we should risk taking seriously and what we should believe - are exactly those raised by Clive Sinclair's new collection of short stories, *Bedbugs*. He writes about a world even more corrupted by unresolved doubt and transient faith than Bashevis Singer's, a world in which, in the century of the holocaust and the atomic bomb, our demons can be seen in photographs, not just out of the corner of the eye; a world, too, which has removed the option of scepticism about evil but provided few alternative certainties. *Bedbugs* is unsettling and difficult, and not the least of the difficulties lies in deciding how seriously to take its author.

Many of the pleasures which marked his last book, the praised and prized *Hearts of Gold*, remain here - the gaming, occasionally gamey verbal humour, the bizarre and imaginative confrontations between the fantastic and the banal - but the mixture is more uneasy, and the tone less sure that cleverness, which has no defences against mystery, will serve to elude the darkness of the world. There is a sense that Sinclair has edged his chair closer to a larger seriousness and in doing so left his readers with less room to be tolerant of his punning, evasive humour. Almost every page declares his indebtedness to the weight of Jewish history and Jewish traditions of mysticism and parable: an indebtedness which carries both the sense of a disciplined gratitude (Sinclair has just finished a critical biography of Isaac Bashevis Singer and his less famous brother Israel) and a guilty consciousness of unpaid dues. The language slimmers with allusion and irony and, every now and then, the unpeppery seedling to the surface of the whole boiling, glimpsed discreetly and disquietingly before it disappears beneath the froth of jokiness. "I am a Banker," President of the Jewish Moral Bank. Our assets include six million dead since 1939

A writer lectures to students about *restraint*: a doctrine which explains creativity as a synthesis of good and evil, and in one story this idea receives the punning endorsement of no less an authority than God, who reassures an angel about the progress of His creation: "You must remember what you see is not real. It is a fiction. Heaven can be dull. That's why I created the world. To provide my subjects with an infinite source of entertainment. And believe me without fault there would be no stories." (It is being the yiddish for troubles or tragedy.) This grand and gnomic apparatus, and the fantastic clarity of the stories, the way in which they combine terror and pleasure, constitute an open invitation to the reader to offer up glosses; but Sinclair continually withholds the satisfactions of simply fabulous interpretation.

At least two troubling stories, for example, moander their way through symbolic landscapes to keep appointments with terrible jokes. This is the literary apotheosis of the shaggy dog story, a form which depends absolutely on the faith of the listener in the storyteller. Sinclair is not above losing the anxious reader more cruelly. In "The Incredible Case of the Stack O' Wheats Murders", slyly subtitled "A True Story", Sir Isaac and Berlin listen quietly as a Jewish private eye recounts the baffling facts. The story ends, "Joshua Smolinsky (d) silent. He awaited Sir Isaac Berlin's response." The tantalizing prospect of the assistance of a great mind in rendering the opaque transparent is held out but remains irretrievable beyond the final period.

At their best these stories provoke salutary uncertainties in the reader, extorting easy fidelities and then revealing them as such. At their most irritating they give a sense of sailing with a captain who always has his life-jacket to hand, who can save himself from the depths with the buoyancy of a joke. The story-teller is Isaac Bashevis Singer's story: he is a Jewish private eye. There is an uneasy feeling in this collection that somehow the tables have been turned.

## Rolling over Chopin

Adam Mars-Jones

JERZY KOSINSKI:

Pinball  
287pp. Michael Joseph. £7.95.  
0 7181 2133 3

A woman is playing Chopin. She plays well. Shortly she will win the Chopin competition in Warsaw. Of course she wears no clothes. She is in love with her piano-teacher, a once-successful composer, now blocked but still able to touch her full expressive use of the pedals. Her playing floods the room with Zai in concentrated form (the punctilious dot over the Z) is the guarantee of Polish purity; Zai sounds like a disinfected but is in fact "that Slavic mood of hopeless rancor". Then he comes to her. He enters her from behind while she continues to play "Out Of My Sight", a Chopin song they both love. Now read on.

He lifted her again, pushed the bench away, and lowered her to the floor. With their clothes for a cushion and the empty seats of the ballroom as their silent audience, she clung to him like a little girl, at once tender and giving, brutal and selfish, yearning to kiss and please him and to be held, trembling and quivering in the grip of her own passion. At length, with one last plunge into her beautiful young body, he finally found, in a realization as swift as sound, the certainty of his wholeness.

Who would guess, coming across this passage in the "Author, Author" column, that it was the handiwork of the dangerously accomplished Jerzy Kosinski? Who, come to that, would expect this sexual fine-tuning of a beautiful instrument (the explicit Donna Doves, en route to Warsaw) when, based fifty pages earlier, the same blocked composer has pronounced (to someone else, admittedly) that "pornography and sentimentality go hand in hand. They both lie about sex."

Nor is the seduction at the keyboard the only passage in *Pinball* where pornography and sentimentality become more strongly interlarded than the phrase "hand in hand" can hope to suggest.

*Pinball* tells the story of Petrick Domostroy (the composer with the block) and his quest to discover the identity of Goddard, a mysterious rock superstar who is to (presumably) the mid-1980s what the Beatles were to the 1960s. Along the way the women are beautiful, the names are cute (Lelmtoviv, Inc, the Hammer-klavier Building, a firm of lawyers called Mahlor, Straus, Handel and Pandorek), and the synthesizers are bang up to date. No rhetorical expense is spared to establish Domostroy as a serious figure, his brow creased with thought even though the music in his head can find no exit.

Nor is the rock musician Goddard (revealed to the reader at the beginning of Part II in his person of mild-mannered James Osten) intellectually a lightweight; you would never guess from his speculations that popular music led to anything as crassly physical as foot-tapping. . . . this necessary transfer of power from the mind to the body was for him one of the deepest mysteries of life, and he often wondered why, by creating the mind in His own image and physical reality in the image of man, God in His wisdom had refused to solve the eternal antinomy between man's mind and man's longing for physical reality.

John Lennon would perhaps be oblivious of such detachment, but he would certainly not be grateful for a passage which uses his death as an object-lesson in How Not To Handle Your Fame, any more than the late Richard Adan (the waiter killed by Jack Henry Abbott) would relish the nasty rumour that Kosinski gives of the incident, with Abbott bafflingly turned into a country-and-western-singing ex-conviat.

Although the novel is notionally a thriller, any suspense is dissipated by

Kosinski's habit of scattering his opinions and his values thickly among the characters, whose conversation tends to be clogged as a consequence: "Thanks to you", says Goddard's true love, whom he has just serenaded incognito, "I have experienced pure music. Listening to you play and sing, I almost felt as if life could be both spontaneous and conscious!" You can see why he loves her; she might solve the eternal antinomy for him.

Even the thriller plot peters out with less violence than is usual for Kosinski; four people are shot dead in the South Bronx, true, but only one is a major character, and Domostroy and Osten share a few moments of rapport while the former tries the latter's tongue from the wall of a well-lit freezer where a rival rock star has stuck it.

*Pinball* is as flashy and mechanical as the game which gives it its title. Its epiphrases, from Shakespeare and Beckett, need impress no one, and despite the constant references to Chopin as a figure whose genius and perversity are inseparable (a sort of Romantic rehearsal for Poland), pornography and sentimentality are the actual poles around which this unlikely novel revolves.

*Parallax Review* 2 (1982: Volume XLIX, Number 2, 319pp.) contains an interview with Donald Barthelme, by Larry McCaffery, in which Barthelme briefly discusses his background, his work as editor of the *Forum*, and managing editor of *Locution*, his interest in painting, and various aspects of his fiction (McCaffery: "It's been my experience that asking a painter what his work 'means' is considered to be in bad taste. This seems to hold true for writers as well." Barthelme: "It's a separate study. How to manifest intelligent sympathy while not saying very much.") The issue also includes a story, "The Letter", by John Soto. Soto's Solovoyev's article "Knowledge of the KGB" (Kosier's "Kosier" by Bernard Crick; and Cynthia Ozick on "What Literature Means".

## CHEKHOV The Early Stories 1883-1888 Chosen and translated by PATRICK MILES and HARVEY PITCHER

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JOHN MURRAY











# to the editor

## 'Studies in Tennyson'

Sir, - In one simple respect, Peter Conrad's account of Tennyson (May 14) is not to be credited. Tennyson did not write "And murmur of innumerable hees" (*The Princess*), but *humming*. He did not write "The silence of the central sea" (*In Memoriam*), but the *stillness*. Or "For all my mind is troubled with a doubt" (*Morte d'Arthur*), but *clouded*; or "In height and powers more than human" (*Tithonus*), but *prose*; or "Now somewhere dead far in the vast Soudan" (*Epithalamion*), but "in the waste Soudan" (this poem Conrad deplores for "a single line word"); or "With honour, honour, honour to him" (*Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*), since there should be a fourth *honour*, which would, for Conrad, mean an even greater "intensity of repetition"; or "The blaze upon the island overhead" (*Enoch Arden*), but "his island" (beautifully refusing to give an exact parallelism with "the blaze upon the island" and poignantly isolating Enoch Arden upon his island).

Mr Conrad expatiates on the effect of the metre in "The Charge of the Light Brigade", and then quotes it as "Cannon to the left of them, Cannon to the right of them, Cannon to the left of them, Cannon to the right of them" (to right and to left). He finds the last two lines of the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* to be "brisk, impatient, glad of an end", and renders this tone less implausible by rephrasing the lines as:

in the vast cathedral here him,  
God accept him, Christ receive him.  
Tennyson had a full stop after "leave him", and any briskness or impatience is not his. It is not true that "his son Hallam published the first biography in 1877" or his grandson Charles "another in 1948" (the dates are 1897 and 1949 respectively). It is false to say of "Morte d'Arthur" that "in 1852 Tennyson added a derivative frame to it"; the frame, "The Epic", was published with "Morte d'Arthur" when that was first published, in 1842.

Mr Conrad's speculations are sometimes worth pondering (I say this as a recipient of his present strictures), but as to facts and the very words, he manifestly can't be bothered.

CHRISTOPHER RICKS,  
Christ's College, Cambridge

Sir, - In his review (May 14) of Hallam Tennyson's *Studies in Tennyson*, Peter Conrad refers to the poet's grandson and biographer Sir Charles Tennyson, coping "with the problem of his forefathers". The next stage in Charles Tennyson's escape was to infect his ancestors with the same morose sense of incapacity he had inherited from them. In his characterization of the poet as his revenge.

Words like "infect", "morose", "incapacity", "revenge" are strangely inappropriate for the serene, gentle, humorous Sir Charles. I do not believe he looked on his Tennyson inheritance as a "problem". In the last eleven years of his life, I had a number of long and happy conversations with him, and we discussed this point on a number of occasions. Had he found it a handicap, I asked, to be a descendant of a famous man? He replied emphatically that it had been nothing but a great advantage. He felt that his own abilities were modest, and the name gave a useful boost. Another time he told me, "I have no creative ability" (in fact not true, as his own half-dozen excellent books show), and therefore his grandfather's name opened doors that might otherwise have been closed.

Mr Conrad sees psychological significance in Sir Charles's contribution to the 1911 book *Tennyson and His Friends*: he wrote only about the poet's older brothers, not his own grandfather. There is a perfectly straightforward explanation. By

1911, Alfred Tennyson's biography had been comprehensively published by Sir Charles's uncle Hallam; it was Alfred's brothers Frederick and Charles who needed to be written about.

DENNIS L. BIRD,  
37 The Avenue, Shoreham-by-Sea,  
West Sussex

## Counter-tenors

Sir, - In his review (April 2) of *The Counter Tenor* by Peter Giles, Anthony Burgess accepts the technical meanderings of the text without criticism, and is clearly confused in his mention of medical matters. Although expressed somewhat oddly, it is indeed possible for anyone to restrict "the vibration of his vocal chords (sic) to a single segment, thus ensuring a high range", as this is what happens when someone sings falsetto, but there is no need for the qualification that such range needs to "take advantage of the vibration of an adult sounding chamber - not possible to boy altos". Boy trebles and altos, as well as female singers, can sing falsetto, and Peter Giles admits that the so-called "head" voice of a soprano is the equivalent of a man singing falsetto. Indeed, the evolution of an adult male alto (who sings falsetto) is from a boy taught to sing falsetto. A good treble or boy alto is often encouraged by his choir master to sing falsetto, so that his voice breaks he can remain a member of the church choir and continue in it as an alto, a voice part that otherwise be difficult to fill. James Bowman and, I gather, Peter Giles are examples of fine singers continuing as adults to sing at a higher pitch than the other male voices, after learning to sing falsetto as boys.

Anthony Burgess writes that the brilliant artificial voices of the contralto eclipsed "the natural falsetto or counter-tenor", and quotes Giles in writing that the high male voice "is a strange, unreal world somewhere in the head, indefinably more than falsetto" (my italics). The main purpose of this letter is to examine what is meant by a "counter-tenor", something that Giles seems to have redefined. It is not just a question of semantics, but of the interpretation of scientific findings. Burgess's mention of castrati implies that the victims of bilateral ligation of the testicular arteries (with subsequent atrophy of the testes) - something that nearly happened to Rossini - "put music before the joys of sex". Eunuchs, whether rendered such before or after puberty, may still enjoy sexual intercourse, and their success in looking after a harem has been said to have been due to this quality.

Mr Giles quotes dictionary definitions: "alto" signifies "the upper or counter-tenor" (1972); "the alto, or counter-tenor voice being entirely an artificial production, and simply a development of the falsetto" (1899); "counter-tenor: a high tenor voice [with] the same character as that of the tenor, and thereby differs from the true male alto or falsetto voice" (1949); "counter tenor (or male alto): a falsetto development of a declinal tenor" (1959); "counter tenor: high tenor, alto... the term, is also used for a male voice of like range of the natural falsetto" (1975). The definitions have varied somewhat, but essentially the problem is whether a counter-tenor is a rare tenor whose ordinary compass of singing voice, or tessitura, is higher than that of a normal tenor, or, as well, a male alto who sings falsetto. Giles appears to have it both ways, if one can understand his argument, that a counter-tenor may or may not sing falsetto according to whether the counter-tenor sings with a chest voice, and the high there will be difficult in the notes, say, below middle C, and for others above this note, unless there is a switch from one to the other method of voice production. For an individual singer it is whether there is a break in the voice which is decisive.

As an anatomist, I found Giles's

chapter, "The vocal mechanism", hard to comprehend, as the diagrams are inaccurate and misleading - in one, the palate is labelled as the pharynx, and the sound waves from the larynx shown to travel through the muscles of the tongue on their way to the nasal cavity - and the understanding of how the anatomy of the pharynx and the nasal sinuses may affect the sound coming from the larynx extremely deficient. To be fair, the literature of singing has been most inadequate - Giles quotes the meaningless sentence: "A man using only his frontal sinuses produces a treble-like tone, the so-called falsetto" - but perhaps more complete medical advice might have balanced Giles's argument differently.

The argument has become that those who sing music written for the counter-tenor must be counter-tenors. Henry Purcell was what Giles calls a low counter-tenor (and thus not usually sing falsetto), and, for instance, in *King Arthur* the written line for the counter-tenor may lie below middle C and difficult for a male alto to sing without a break in the voice, or at sufficient volume. To get to personilities (as Giles does), the late Alfred Deller's natural singing voice was baritone, and, on listening to records of him singing, a break in his voice may be obvious from time to time. Giles quotes Deller writing in *A Singularity of Voice*: "There are generally recognised to be two types of counter-tenor voice. The first, and more usual, is where the fundamental voice is baritone or bass, and the head voice, or so-called falsetto, is developed to the maximum range. My own voice is of this type." Alfred Deller was invariably called a counter-tenor, and it was for him that Benjamin Britten wrote the part of Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. At the first performance at Covent Garden, however, Sir George Solti insisted that the American singer, Russell Oberlin, took the part. Oberlin claims not to use falsetto notes, and to my personal knowledge does not show a break in his voice. Giles believes that some counter-tenors change from head voice to chest voice without the change in pronunciation being apparent, and that Oberlin does this unconsciously, and is likely to use a falsetto voice in his singing. He does agree, however, that Oberlin's counter-tenor "is most certainly based on an abnormally high range of the male voice, but for my part I am sure that Russell Oberlin is a true counter-tenor."

The argument rests that a true counter-tenor is rare and a singer who is, in fact, a high tenor, while most so-called "counter-tenors", including Alfred Deller, who admitted it, are technically male altos singing falsetto. In no way, however, should this lower the appreciation of their singing abilities and the pleasure that they give to very many.

MILO KEYNES,  
Department of Anatomy, University of Cambridge

## 'The Mathematical Experience'

Sir, - In Roger Penrose's engaging review of *The Mathematical Experience* (May 14), he misleadingly suggests that Gödel's incompleteness proof provides evidence for Platonism. In the philosophy of mathematics, Gödel's theorem shows, as Penrose points out, that we cannot equate mathematical truth with truth in any formalized system of mathematics. For given any consistent arithmetic Gödel shows how one can construct a sentence G in the language of S which is unprovable in S, and yet one can prove in the proof, that the sentence G is true. This is indeed a serious blow to formalism. However, it does not, in itself, support Platonism, for it remains open to one to construe mathematical truth in terms of informal provability. The only reason that we think that the Gödel sentence G

is true is that we have proved it to be true, albeit by informal means.

Professor Penrose's reasoning looks plausible because he seems to assume that there are only three available positions in the philosophy of mathematics: Platonism, formalism and constructivism. He simply dismisses constructivism for its subjectivity and time-dependence, argues that Gödel's theorem eliminates formalism as an option, and that the danger with any argument that proceeds by eliminating alternatives is that there might be unimagined approaches to the philosophy of mathematics which Penrose does not consider, but I shall simply mention a modern and an ancient example: Hartley Field in his recent book *Science Without Numbers* and Aristotle (the first and greatest anti-Platonist) in *Metaphysics* M have each proposed challenging philosophies of mathematics that are neither Platonist nor formalist nor constructivist.

JONATHAN LEAR,  
Clare College, Cambridge

## 'The Voyage of the Destiny'

Sir, - Intriguing though the possibility raised by my review of Robert Nye's *The Voyage of the Destiny* (April 30) be, I'm sorry to have to report that there are no "Christian covenants" in this novel, only Christian covens. "Covens", alas, was an inspired misreading - a veritable Bloomian misprision - by *The Times*'s telephonic copy-taker. So apologies to any aggrieved occultist who on this mistaking basis rushed out to the bookshop.

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM,  
Corpus Christi College, Oxford

## 'The Prince of Homburg'

Sir, - Without wishing to enter into a debate about the merits or demerits of John James's version of *The Prince of Homburg* at the Coliseum Theatre, reviewed by Stephen Spender (Commentary, May 14), may I point out that we are the sole distributors of the remaindered volume no 36 of *Physis of the Year*, which contains Jonathan Griffin's

## Among this week's contributors

- JAMES BARR is Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford.
- JOHN BATCHELOR's *The Edwardian Novelists* was published in 1981.
- ALAN BROWNJOHN's most recent book of poems is *A Night in the Gazebo*, 1980.
- CHARLES CAUSLEY's most recent publication is *The Ballad of Aucassin and Nicolette*, 1981, and, as editor, *The Sun, Dnning*, 1982.
- HENRY CHAOWICK's most recent book is *Boethius: the Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy*, 1981.
- EVELINE CRUICKSHANKS is the author of *Political Unintelligibles: the Tories and the '43*, 1979.
- HERMONIE HOBHOUSE is Secretary of the Victorian Society and the author of *Lost London* (1971).
- PAMELA HORN's most recent book is *A Georgian Parson and his Village*, 1981.
- LAURENCE KELLY is the author of *Lermontov: Tragedy in the Caucasus*, 1977.
- DONALD MACKINNON was Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, 1960-78.
- LUCY MAIR's books include *African Kingdoms*, 1977.
- ADAM MARS-JONES has just been awarded the Somerset Maugham Prize for his book of stories *Lament*, Lecture.
- G. E. MINOAY is Professor of Agrarian History at the University of Kent.
- ALEC NOVE's books include *Political Economy and Soviet Socialism*, 1979.
- GEOFFREY PARBINDER is Emeritus Professor of the Comparative Study of Religions, University of London.
- D. Z. PHILLIPS is Professor of Philosophy at University College, Swansea.
- ALEX PRAYOGA is a Lecturer in Soviet and Eastern European Politics at the University of Reading.
- WILLIAM SCAMMELL's most recent book of poems is *Yes and No*, 1979.
- ROBERT SCRIBNER is a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge.
- RICHARD SHANNON's *Gladstone: Volume 1 1809-1865* will be published later this year.
- W. A. SPECK is Professor of History at the University of Hull.
- THOMAS SUTCLIFFE is a Radio Producer for the BBC.
- STEWART R. SUTHERLAND is Professor of the History and Philosophy of Religion, King's College London.

marvellous translation, in iambic pentameters, of Kleist's play. This translation was used in the first production of the play in Britain, at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, in 1976, directed by Caspar Wrede, with Tom Courtenay and James Maxwell among the distinguished cast. The book is available from me for £1.20, including postage.

ANTHONY RUDOLF,  
Menard Press, 8 The Oaks, Woodside Avenue, London N12

## 'Dear Animated Bust'

Sir, - In his review of Maurice Baring's *Dear Animated Bust* (May 7) Julian Jeffs refers to our prefatory note about the poor quality of the original galley proofs (from which the book is reproduced). He then goes on to say: "And having just criticized the original galleys, it is a pity that the printing (including the inking) of this book is very poor."

It is much more of a pity, if I may defend my most trusted printer, that Mr Jeffs should not realize that a facsimile of the original will reproduce its faults - and generally its point of the prefatory note he claims to have read. Perhaps he had it in mind that we should have read the text. That is quite a different matter, and merely shows, quite excusably, that he knows nothing about the economics of publishing for this sort of market.

MICHAEL RUSSELL,  
Michael Russell (Publishing) Ltd,  
The Chantry, Wilton, Salisbury,  
Wiltshire

## 'Human Destructiveness'

Sir, - In "Among this week's contributors" (May 7), you attribute to me the authorship of *Human Destructiveness* (1972) and *The Art of Psychotherapy* (1979). The latter title is correct; the former should be *Human Destructiveness*, now out of print. But thank you for the incorrect title. One day, I might use it.

ANTHONY STORR,  
7 St Margaret's Road, Oxford

## DIPLOMACY

GUSTAV SCHMIDT:  
England in der Krise: Grundzüge  
und Grundlagen der britischen  
Aussenpolitik (1930-1937)  
691pp. Opladen: Westdeutscher  
Verlag, DM 82.  
0 531 1492 1

During the past decade and a half, unknown to most historians in this country, there has appeared a steady stream of writings by German scholars on the way British external policy operated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Much of this has concentrated, predictably, on that crisis period in Anglo-German relations, the age of "appeasement". Thus, the most thorough examination of the economic aspects of British policy towards Hitler is the encyclopedic work by Bernd-Jürgen Wendt, *Economic Appeasement. Handel und Finanz in der britischen Deutschlandpolitik 1933-1939* (Düsseldorf, 1971); one of the most useful overall assessments of Whitehall's defence policy is Reinhard Meyers's *Britische Sicherheitspolitik 1934-1938* (Düsseldorf, 1976); and the best-informed study of British policy towards the Soviet Union so far is Gottfried Niedhart's *Grossbritannien und der Sowjetunion 1934-1939* (Munich, 1972). These scholars have also written a shoal of articles, on various aspects of appeasement, as have Manfred Schlenke, Clemens Bäum, Rainer Tamchina, Wolf Gerner, Lothar Kettenacker and Oswald Hauser. Hauser is now preparing the second volume of *England und das Dritte Reich* (Volume 1, covering 1933-36, was published in Stuttgart in 1970).

But today's German scholarship has ranged much further back than the 1930s. *Die Weimarer Republik* has produced an extensive book on *Die Außenpolitik und die Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 1978); and Bernd Dornemann has important work on post-war foreign economic policy, entitled *Die deutsche Europapolitik in der Wirtschaftskrise* (Munich, 1980). Jost Dülffer has written on British handling of the Hague Peace conferences in *Regelung gegen den Krieg* (Berlin, 1981); Günter Hollenberg on German politics in Britain, in *Englisches England im Kaiserreich... 1860-1914* (Weiden, 1974); and Klaus Wormer on Britain's pre-1914 policy towards the two great military empires in *Grossbritannien, Russland und Deutschland* (Munich, 1980). There are also other studies of British Indian-defence policy (by Horst Jochen), Middle East oil policy (Helmut Meißner), Parliament and foreign affairs (Karl Schröder), Anglo-German relations and the Irish question (Wolfgang Hüneler), and more are on the way. Gruner's thesis on British policy towards the German question in the early nineteenth century will soon be published, as will (one trusts) Klaus Hildebrand's study on Britain and the unification of Germany. Karl Rohe's work on British social-imperialism, and Haidelore Schmidt's researches on First World War economic policy.

Further titles might well be added to this list; but all of those named above are significant and, usually, very weighty studies. Based upon extensive research into the records in this country and elsewhere, and containing bibliographies of sometimes staggering dimensions, they offer new insights into the study of British external policy, as well as introducing much fresh archival material. Yet it is rare to see British scholars (with the exception of James Joll, Keith Robbins, Donald Watt and a few others) referring to this impressive store of German-language works; and rarely still to find North American historians of British foreign policy who have even heard of half of the titles above. Many of the German authors listed here are amazed or irritated at this ignorance, and rightly so. German is not an impossible language for the diplomatic or military historian; indeed, since the French have virtually abandoned those fields for *Annales*-type socio-economic history, German is now arguably the most important

# The logic of appeasement

Paul Kennedy

second language to English for any one studying international relations. Although the German Historical Institute in London is doing its best to close this "knowledge gap" (including the recent holding of an Anglo-German conference on appeasement, the collected papers of which will be published soon by Allen and Unwin), it clearly faces an uphill task.

What makes this German scholarship more interesting is that it often attempts to say something about the *ideology* of the British external policy-making process, which few notable exceptions generally avoid. This difference in approach, and the fact that so many Germans now write on British history, can partly be explained by the university career-structure in the Federal Republic. Intending academics there must research and write their *Doktorarbeit*, akin to the British or American PhD thesis; but, if they are to stand a chance of one day being "called" to a chair, they must also produce an even more substantial thesis, the *Habilitationsschrift*, which ought to be - and generally is - in a different area from the doctorate. By far the largest percentage of *Doktorarbeiten* deal with German history, naturally enough; so why not do the higher dissertation on a British historical topic, the more especially since English is the clear second language in Germany, and since the Public Record Office is so accessible?

But this, in turn, means that many of the scholars named above bring with them prior experience of German historical controversies, and ask questions which have arisen in debates over Bismarck, or Hitler's policies. In particular, most of them were influenced to some degree by that ringing dispute of the 1960s about whether German external policy was primarily determined by domestic political factors (the *Primat der Innenpolitik* view, favoured by Eckart Kohr's followers and other left-of-centre historians); or, rather, by external events (the *Primat der Aussenpolitik* position, originally ascribed to a Ranke himself, but accepted by later, usually conservative writers). To give concrete examples: was Bismarck's colonial bid of 1884 a cunning move in his European diplomacy (*Aussenpolitik*), or an attempt to win the general election, strike at the Progressives, and ruin social democracy (*Innenpolitik*); was Tirpitz's battle-fleet built in response to the necessities of world politics (*Aussenpolitik*), or as a subtle effort to stabilize the social order (*Innenpolitik*); and, the most famous debate of all, did Hitler start the Second World War because he was bent on hegemony (*Aussenpolitik*), or because he was escaping from impossible domestic-economic contradictions, and the Nazi system inexorably tended that way (*Innenpolitik*)?

The study of British history, then, was not only a suitable field of exploration in itself, but it could also contribute to the German debate, by providing comparative data which confirmed, or undermined, established schools of thought in the Federal Republic. A good example here would be that of Professor Klaus Hildebrand, one of the most brilliant and polemical of the younger German historians, who used his researches into British foreign policy under Gladstone and Disraeli to argue that the leaders of industry, realizing that modernization need not necessarily act *à la Bismarck* - that is, act reformist domestically, and aggressive externally, in a series of writings chiefly aimed at Hans-Ulrich Wehler's ideas about "social imperialism" and the "manipulation from above" by German élites, Hildebrand countered with evidence of a capitalist society whose Whig and Tory leaders adopted a strategy of implementing gradual domestic reforms and of preserving external peace, always provided that the latter did not involve a total surrender of "British interests".

But was British diplomacy really not influenced by domestic pressures like those in Germany? Did Westminster politicians never embark upon imperial ventures, to find electoral popularity? How did they handle the pleas of the chambers of commerce, or arm-twisting by financiers? What led them to decide that a certain British interest (say, China trade) must be defended, whereas another (say, in eastern Europe) was negotiable? Did the various extensions of the franchise alter the aims and purposes of British diplomacy? Even if one abandons the dogmatic *Primat der Innenpolitik* position, just how did an external event like the rise of Hitler interact with an internal event like the rise of Labour?

Not all of the German historians in question crossed the Channel carrying this bagful of preconceptions and questions; but most of them did. And, whether one fully agrees with their approach or not, it hardly seems sensible for British scholars in this field to ignore such a trend, or the major array of historical works which have resulted from it. Still less does it seem wise to be ignorant of the frame of questioning which has characterized so many of these endeavours.

Gustav Schmidt's enormous *England in der Krise* is best understood against such a background. The adjective "enormous" is no exaggeration to describe a work nearly 700 tightly-printed pages in length, and containing probably over 400,000 words. The list of sources at the end (over fifty pages long) details the collection of fifty-four private individuals or bodies such as the FBO, mountains of files from the Cabinet, Committee of Imperial Defence, Foreign Office, Treasury, Board of Trade and other ministries, newspapers and journals of every sort, and a bibliography of secondary works which must run into thousands of titles.

The book itself is divided into four main parts, following a thirty-page methodological "Introduction". The first section is a survey of Britain's relations with other powers - Germany, Japan, France, Russia, the United States and (as an "external factor") the Dominions - as well as an analysis of the country's place in the global system of the 1930s. What Schmidt is seeking to show here is an external environment which had much altered for the worse since the cosy 1920s. It was not simply that there had arisen so suddenly two threats to British interests at opposite ends of the world, in central Europe and the Far East; it was also that Britain's relations with its two traditional partners, France and the United States, had changed. The world economic crisis of 1929-33 was chiefly to blame for this. In its early stages, it had given advantages to France, which owned large gold stocks and was less dependent upon international trade, thus permitting it to adopt hard-line policies towards Germany - and in turn frustrating British hopes of securing a general settlement of political issues (disarmament, boundaries) and economic disputes (tariffs, debts). After 1934, however, the fast-weakening French economy and concomitant internal fissures meant that the substitute had to be found for this "policeman" of the Versailles order - before that order was destroyed by Hitler. Anglo-American relations were also more disturbed to the early 1930s than previously. The naval issue might be less contentious, but economic quarrels over tariffs and war debts were more prominent. The United States was less willing to assist in Europe (which the British needed), and wanted Britain to stand firm against Japan in the Far East (which, since Washington offered no guarantee of support, the British did not dare to do).

It was not simply, then, that dealing with "the German problem" involved a constant reference to France, and the dealing with "the Japan problem" involved equally close consultation with the United States. An additional complication was that these two triangular rela-

tionships interacted with each other. For example, British attempts to improve relations with Tokyo would, it was argued, enable a stiffer line to be taken towards Berlin - which would gratify the French; but this "appeasement" of the Japanese would enrage the Americans, possibly with grave consequences, and that would alarm the Dominions. The stiffer tone in Europe might also lead the Germans to settle their differences with that other "mystery" state, the Soviet Union. The whole thing worked in the reverse order, too: if Japan threatened aggression in the Far East, the British would need to move closer to the United States; but they would probably also have to "buy off" Hitler in Europe, which might alarm France and its smaller allies. The rise of a third potential enemy in Mussolini's Italy after 1935 added to an already complex situation.

Thus, the "crisis" of the book's title was, in the first instance, one of global strategy. More than any of the other powers, Britain had interests to defend across the world, and not merely in one continent. How, then, could these pressing problems be overcome? Here Schmidt moves on to the second part of his study, which is an examination of the views of three of the most important "men of influence" in Whitehall: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Secretary to the Cabinet and the Committee of Imperial Defence; Admiral Chatfield, First Sea Lord and Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee; and Sir Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. All three possessed vast experience, and were aware of the political context within which British governments had to operate when formulating foreign and defence policies. Yet, it says little for the notion of a unified, superior "official" mind of govern-

ment" that each offered a different solution to the problem; or, rather, different permutations of solutions to the problems. Vansittart and Chatfield were willing to improve relations with Germany by "colonial appeasement", but Hankey was not. Chatfield and Hankey wished to turn their backs on eastern Europe, which Vansittart regarded as an act of short-term folly. Chatfield, predictably, was worried about Britain's weaknesses at sea, especially in the Far East, whereas Vansittart and Hankey were more concerned about lack of strength in the air in the event of war against Germany. Vansittart argued for supporting France; Hankey acknowledged that the German threat to the European equilibrium had to be guarded against, but was more reserved about a Continental commitment; Chatfield concentrated upon imperial sea-routes and bases.

There were, of course, many other people of (varying) influence - Warren Fisher at the Treasury, Lothian and his circle, Amery and the arch-imperialists, not to mention senior ministers like Baldwin, MacDonald, Chamberlain and Simon - who had their own permutations of solutions to these problems. Even within a coherent decision-making process and a reasonably harmonious sociopolitical élite, there were significant differences of opinion simply because the issues were so complex. "Appeasement" itself, therefore, was never a constant, or uniformly understood policy. Those who (like Neville Chamberlain and Warren Fisher) sought at first to improve relations with Japan were regarded as "appeasers" by others who preferred to be firm with Japan - and were then seen as "appeasers" of the United States and usually Germany. Some wanted to build the Royal Navy, others the Royal Air Force. Such conflicts of aim on both the strategic and the tactical level

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were all too common in the making of British policy during the early and middle years of the decade, yet how could any one of these people demonstrate at the time that his preferred order of priorities was the correct one?

But the "crisis" of England was not merely a military-international one: there was simultaneously a profound structural economic crisis, and potentially a social crisis. Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there had been increasing concern about the widening gap between Britain's global obligations on the one hand, and its actual capacity to defend those interests on the other; yet somehow, by diplomacy and good fortune, a complete *Krach* had always been avoided. Even the strain of the First World War had been met (at least at great cost) by mobilizing the country's vast latent resources, and by simultaneously acquiring new allies - Japan, the United States, the Dominions - and thus becoming dominant. The 1929-33 economic crisis had delivered a further series of blows at Britain's military strength (the decay of basic export industries, falling receipts of the City, a balance-of-payments crisis), while the same time providing a catalyst for extreme nationalist movements in Germany, Japan and elsewhere. The power at the status quo was weakened, just as the status quo was about to be challenged. Thus buffeted by economic storms, it was not surprising that many dreads in Britain saw a possible solution to these problems in the policy of "economic appeasement".

"Economic appeasement", as Schmidt makes clear in a substantial third section of some 200 pages, was actually a whole bundle of things. It could mean the activities of specific industries, banks, chambers of commerce and individuals who had a great deal to gain from an improvement in Anglo-German trading relations - whether by a return to the lower tariffs and free competition of the *old days*, or by *artificial* arrangements with their German opposite numbers. It could also mean that cluster of ideas held by some political circles and by Treasury, Board of Trade and Bank of England officials about the "liberalization" of international trade,

which had as their macro-economic end the boosting of the country's exports and its long-term prosperity. In addition, there was the political question and consequent unemployment had proved the seedbed for extreme nationalism in Germany and Japan, any measures tending towards general economic recovery were bound to assist the so-called "moderate" forces in those countries; just as it was argued that supplying financial credits, and offering free access to colonial raw materials, might head off a tendency on Berlin's part towards autarky and aggression.

Because "economic appeasement" was a huddle of proposals, it also encountered a bundle of difficulties. A complete return to free trade would be opposed by the protectionist lobby, especially its imperialist wings, and also no doubt by France. Any cartel arrangements, bilateral clearing mechanisms, or mutual recognition of (say) German and British "spheres of interest" would upset the Americans, and thus be frowned upon by the Foreign Office. Concessions to Berlin over colonial raw material could lead to problems with the Dominions and Conservative backbenchers. Acknowledging a German economic "Monroe Doctrine" in eastern Europe would be opposed by British firms and banks doing business there. Besides, there were political arguments against such a move. Might not the recognition of German economic preponderance in, say, Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia be a tacit admission of political hegemony there as well? What would be the effect on Britain's relations with France, or Russia, or the United States? Was it prudent to strengthen German industry, and provide it with financial credits and raw materials, if Hitler really was bent upon aggression? The sheer diversity of opinions, and nuances of standpoint, are examined here in impressive detail. After this, it will no longer be possible simply to refer to "economic appeasement" as something hatched by the City, or by *unscrupulous* businessmen, or as cabots with many sorts were certainly eager to influence official policy, but matters and their advisers were equally keen to explore the possibility of using

economic instruments to secure a political end - stability and peace in Europe.

Yet what if it was impossible to preserve that stability and peace? The depressing fact was that, although Hitler and his associates - men such as Goering, Schacht, Ribbentrop, and Weizsäcker - often encouraged the British to talk about "colonial appeasement" and "economic appeasement", the German government was also prone to make unpredictable, aggressive moves which cast doubt upon its ultimate intentions as well as its sincerity. Most ominous of all, it continued to devote vast funds towards a large-scale army and a very threatening *Luftwaffe*. Was it not prudent for the British government to strengthen its defences even while it continued to pursue its quest for international harmony?

It was this contentious issue of rearmament, Schmidt explains in his final section, which brought all of the strands of the English "crisis" together. In the first place, the diversion of funds into armaments might well produce damaging social fissures. The Labour Party, most Liberals, the trade unions and that extensive array of pacifist and internationalist pressure-groups were bitterly opposed to higher defence estimates in the early-to-mid 1930s; and to men like Baldwin, committed to paper over the class antagonisms in British society and to keeping the Conservative Party in the centre of power, this was probably the most important political fact of all. Even when, by the late 1930s, the trade unions had modified their attitude to rearmament, they were claiming social and political concessions (the "conscription of wealth" to match the "conscription of labour") as the price for cooperation. Secondly, a heavy rearmament programme would sooner or later lead to a financial crisis. As the Treasury never ceased to point out, the post-1931 British economy resembled an ailing patient; but instead of careful nursing (on threatened by exhortations which would halt its slow recovery and might even kill it off altogether. Large-scale defence spending could help a specific industry like shipbuilding, but it would unbalance the budget, divert

resources from "productive" to "unproductive" investment, distort the labour market, produce a widening gap in the balance of payments and lead to a run on sterling - which would leave Britain weaker in the long run, even if better-armed in the short run.

The domestic-political factor, and the financial factor, were therefore major constraints upon the rearmament programme after 1934. The Chiefs of Staff could only be given a small portion of what they declared was necessary to provide security for Britain and the Empire. Worse, each cautious rise in the British defence estimates seemed to be matched - and often eclipsed - by fresh rearmament programmes announced in Berlin, Tokyo and Rome. Since Britain clearly could not equal the military spending of those three potential enemies, she was compelled to make hard decisions about her own defence priorities. Should she concentrate on the Royal Air Force, in order to secure the homeland? Or on the Royal Navy, to preserve the sea routes and territories of a global empire? Or (a distasteful option) the Army, to indicate her commitment to the balance of power in Europe? These issues, which weighed heavily on the decision-makers, in turn involved judgments about the order of dangers. Was Japan more likely to strike than Germany? Could Mussolini be more easily bought off with colonial concessions than Hitler? If such offers were to be made, what representations might ensue from the Americans? In other words, one returns full circle to the complex crisis in the international system described in Section One of this book. There was, in short, no obvious and easy solution.

Instead, British governments in the 1930s had to carry out a juggling act at the diplomatic level (negotiations with potential foes, and potential allies), and at the domestic-political level (winning elections, preserving backbench support), and at the fiscal level (keeping a balance between rearmament and economic stability), and at the strategic level (adjusting resources among the services to the most threatened areas). Given the elaborate decision-making system of committees and Cabinets, it was hardly surprising that Britain's appeasement policy was halting, difficult, occasionally contradictory and not very glorious compared with the spectacular acts of the dictators.

"Waiting upon events" and ordering another look at defence weaknesses alternated with policies of cautious reactions in Berlin, or with pained As the Austrian and Czech crises approached in 1938, the British Government faced a dilemma little different from that over Manchuria seven years earlier - except perhaps that it was now more aware of how the international scene had deteriorated, and more sensitive to the domestic and fiscal constraints within which it must operate.

The above represents a crude and all-too-brief summary of an extensive, complex analysis of "The Main Features and Foundations of British Appeasement Policy" (Schmidt's subtitle). As a mere review, it reduces whole sections of this book to a single sentence, and simplifies where the author has spent many pages in describing nuances, exceptions, and variations. In addition, there are many fine sections in Schmidt's study - on the workings of the Treasury, or the state of British industry, or the committee process - which are not dealt with here. Nevertheless, the preceding paragraphs should serve to indicate roughly the content, structure, and dimensions of this important book.

Does it possess any obvious defects? It must be said immediately that a book about "appeasement" policy, which does not cover the long history of that policy in 1939, Schmidt's defence will be that his concern has been to analyse the "defining factors" and the overall of politics within which British cabinets were operating, as they moved towards 1938, not to narrate the story of Anglo-German diplomatic negotiations and tensions, which is fair enough. Yet it will still leave some readers dissatisfied.

It may also be said that the work offers too much detail, and at times becomes too complicated. Footnotes occupy one-third, one-half, occasionally seven-eighths of many of the pages; and within one footnote there may be up to a dozen references to documents, books and articles in order to buttress, say, a subsidiary argument against *Bernhard* (Wendt and Callum MacDonald) the meaning of "economic appeasement". The reader who spends five minutes following the gist of that footnote is then likely to have lost track of the main argument in the text above. Finally, on this question of presentation, it is fair to warn potential readers that some acquaintance with the language of Political Science / International Relations theory will be an advantage.

As to substance, *England in der Krise* offers a more comprehensive analysis of the role of the "Whitehall factor" and business interests/economic elements in the policy of appeasement, than it does of public opinion and general attitudes. The press, opinion polls, reports from the Whips on the mood of the Commons, pressure-groups like the League of Nations Union and the Peace Pledge Union, together with that cluster of attitudes about war, Continental commitment, and so on, are background reference-points rather than subjects for careful, detailed scrutiny; objects in the wings, rather than in the centre of the stage.

One final reservation. This book is, as mentioned earlier, an indirect contribution to that German historical debate about the "primacy" of external versus internal factors in the determining of a country's foreign policy. Schmidt succeeds brilliantly in demonstrating that such a polarization of causes is artificial and unground. British appeasement policy in the 1930s flowed from the interaction of external trends, strategic calculations, economic pressures, financial constraints, domestic forces and the personal preferences of decision-makers. The "model", if one is to use such terminology, is multi-faceted and reversible, rather than one-way "determining" another. It is therefore puzzling to find, at a few places, Schmidt stating that appeasement is ultimately to be seen as a "significantly determined domestic-political crisis strategy", or as a calculation that it was better to run some external risks than to provoke internal dangers. It is not clear why, having shown the many interacting sides to appeasement policy, it is necessary to hint that one of those aspects (the domestic-political) may, after all, be the most important.

But these criticisms pale beside the sheer achievement of the work. *England in der Krise* is the most thorough, widely researched and best-documented book on British appeasement policy that exists. It makes all of the English-language studies of this topic seem insubstantial by comparison, and some of them very lightweight indeed. The lesson, then, should be clear. English and American historians of British external policy, as if they choose to continue to ignore German-language writings in this field by Professor Schmidt and others. But they do so at their scholarly peril, and to their own disadvantage.

*Debate on Disarmament* (143pp, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £2.95, 0 71000 9269 5). Edited by Michael Clarke and Majorie Mowlam. Includes contributions by Mary Kaldor on the Soviet military threat, Michael Pentz on nuclear war and the responsibilities of scientists, John Robinson on a Christian response to the arms race, Jonathan Dimbleby on the media and defence and John Galtung on Nato and Western European States. The volume has its origins in a series of lectures organized as a response to the 1981 Ralfs lectures by Laurence Marla and it ends with a critique of Martin B. P. Thompson who concludes: "I can see at last I can see who Professor Martin is. He is an Allen, descended from the alienated, ecotoplastic world, to instruct us in our duties to The System. The Ralfs lectures were Close. Encounters of the Fourth Kind. If we are dutiful, moderate and obedient, we may expect Close Encounters of a Fifth Kind. They will be the last."

Robert P. Carroll started out with the aim of bringing up to date the classic study of the prophet Jeremiah by John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 1922. In due course it turned out that the book was more a re-orientation for Skinner, and indeed a thorough contrast with that scholar's ideas and methods. The Skinnerian approach suggested that, certain secondary materials being put aside, the book of Jeremiah is fairly direct evidence upon which the life and even the thoughts of the prophet can be reconstructed. Baruch was the secretary of the prophet but his work was directed by Jeremiah. Against this older and essentially biographical approach, the present work depicts the book of Jeremiah as a collection of the shape of which is basically determined by the ideology of the "deuteronomists". They depict Jeremiah as the sort of person to be, thus very little of the material can be seen as the authentic personal expression of the prophet's soul in his encounter with God. The tradition about Baruch are not straight-forward historical evidence but give "fair indication of the scribal origins of the account". In Jeremiah 36 is a historical one; it has "all the marks of a dramatized encounter between king

## The power of protest

Robert Scribner

RAINER WOHLFEIL:  
Einführung in die Geschichte der deutschen Reformation  
230pp. Munich: Beck. DM26.  
3 406 08675 6

JOHN M. TODD:  
Luther: A Life  
396pp. Hamish Hamilton. £18.  
0 241 10703 2

For most of this century, Luther has set the standard against which all other aspects of the German Reformation have been measured. Understanding the Reformation meant understanding Luther and his impact; the best introduction to the subject was believed to be a good biography of the man. During the past decades, however, some remarkable changes have been taking place in Reformation historiography, excellently summed up in Rainer Wohlfeil's survey of recent research. Intended largely as a student introduction, this book is also a major contribution to the current debate about social historical approaches to the Reformation, and it shows how inadequate a Luther-centred view has become.

Wohlfeil sketches briefly the main phases of development of the German Reformation, and provides an overview of the major schools of historiography since the sixteenth century. He then turns to an extended discussion of the concepts used to understand the Reformation, pointing out that many of our common assumptions about it are impossible of later ages, rather than sixteenth-century perceptions of events. The notions of "Protestant" and "Protestantism" in our modern usage were creations of the seventeenth century - as was "the Reformation" itself. The concept of the "Reformation", describing an ecclesiastical event, dates only from the nineteenth century, and was, the creation of Ranke.

Doctrine is not neglected. Wohlfeil gives a lucid account of the many different kinds of doctrine being

preached during the first half of the sixteenth century, indicating that it was by no means certain that Luther's would come to be the norm. The reason for this is found in two themes which receive the greater part of Wohlfeil's attention and now stand at the centre of recent historiography: the wide-ranging public debate precipitated by the "Luther affair", which created in Germany for the first time something resembling modern "public opinion"; and the movements which arose in the wake of this debate demanding changes not only in religious practices but in many other areas of life as well. These began in the German towns, but spilled over into the countryside, and ranged from public assemblies, protest meetings and minor demonstrations to riots, urban rebellions and the complex confrontation known as the German Peasants' War. Historians have yet to assess the full measure of these movements, but it is clear that they combined religious with social and economic hopes and fears, and released an extraordinary ferment in German society. Historians from the German Democratic Republic consider the entire phenomenon to have amounted to an "early bourgeois revolution", although Wohlfeil, in a careful analysis of their approach, denies the applicability of the label.

The inspiration for all these associations was the desire, encouraged by the example of Luther himself, to apply Christian principles consistently to the conduct of daily life. For this reason alone, theology and theological tendencies cannot be ignored in any analysis. But the Reformation movements were often more responsive to Zwinglianism or Anabaptism than to Lutheranism, which became too cautious and submissive to authority when faced with serious socio-economic and ecclesiastical issues, especially after the Peasants' War. Wohlfeil rightly identifies Anabaptism and ecclesiastical radicalism as a major theme in modern Reformation historiography, although he seriously underestimates the originality of both tendencies in seeing them as a "reaction" to Lutheranism, rather than independent movements in their own right. Another similar

phenomenon, hitherto largely ignored by historians, is iconoclasm and Wohlfeil likewise picks out this theme, and the wider question of the Reformation and art, as an important field for discussion in the years ahead.

Most important, however, is his contention that the Reformation can only be properly understood "in social historical perspective". Here he echoes the views of several other historians who maintained that the Reformation involved not just changes in individual belief, but forms of group behaviour. He argues that social, political and religious matters were inextricably interlinked, and that Reformation movements were more decisively shaped by non-religious influences than has so far been conceded by church historians. There is only one major omission here. Wohlfeil's failure to discuss the recent work of Peter Bickel, who argues that it was the importance attached to the Gospel as a legitimation of social protest and of the principle of Christian liberty interpreted in a social context, which precipitated a near-revolution in 1524-26. But Wohlfeil has produced an excellent introduction to what deserves to be labelled the "new Reformation history".

To attempt any new biography of Luther in the light of this is a hazardous undertaking, demanding that Luther be seen neither as hero nor saint. John M. Todd's life succeeds admirably in establishing the human limits of the man while yet appreciating his undoubted achievements. Todd is fascinated by Luther's psychology, but without falling into the crude Freudianism of Erikson's *Young Man Luther*. We see Luther as a depressive personality (Todd comes close to saying manic depressive), irascible, given to sexual lusts, to outbursts of extraordinary coarseness and obsessed with his chronic constipation. Todd does not refrain from criticizing him for being

enables us to assess Luther's true measure as a man of boundless energy and passion for people and ideas, and with a profound commitment to what he held to be genuine religious experience. This very positive side of Luther made him a scholar and theologian of genius, and a teacher,

pastor, husband and father of gentle understanding and kindly humour.

Todd does not escape all the dangers of the traditional biography. He concentrates a little too much on the "heroic years" of 1517-22 and on the "confessional" events up to 1530 which formed the Lutheran church. It would have been useful, however, to have heard more about Luther's pastoral work in the years 1528-46, when he was engaged in the singularly frustrating work of building up this new church. We could also have been told more about Luther's continual expectations of the Last Days, and the waxing and waning of his apocalyptic mood, closely related to his growing pessimism about the possibility of forming within his own generation genuinely pious Christian believers. Sometimes Todd over-dramatizes his achievements - for example, writing of Luther's 1520 reform programme as "slopping in the extent of change it demanded". Yet it was only a few points more radical (its theological implications aside) than other reform plans abroad at the time. In fact, the most shocking of Luther's suggestions is very rarely mentioned: that a woman with an impotent husband is justified not only in taking a lover, but also in going off to live with him elsewhere in a common-law marriage.

Sometimes Todd uses modern terminology which sits uneasily on descriptions of sixteenth-century events: the pre-Reformation church characterized as a "totalitarian polity", the terms "left", "right", "centre" used to describe the spectrum of reform around Luther. Indeed, given that Luther provoked one of the major upheavals in the history of the Christian Church, it seems quite inappropriate to speak of him as standing "in the centre". Occasionally Todd translates badly: for example, using the term "living wildly" for *wilde Ehe* (common-law marriage).

There are a few minor errors of fact, the most important of which is to speak of the "massive violence" committed by the peasant rebels of 1524-25 under the influence of "extramural leaders". Such leaders rarely set the tone of the Peasants' War, and the amount of violence was very small by the standards of the time, certainly far less than that visited on the rebels in revenge. It should be said here that Todd's treatment of Luther's role in the Peasants' War is an excellent example of fair-minded historical judgment.

Although Todd pays more attention to political and ecclesiastical matters than to social or economic, he is not unaware of recent trends in Reformation scholarship. This may escape the general reader in the absence of footnotes or any substantial bibliography, but it is clear to the specialist eye in numerous references throughout his text. His frequent use of careful qualifications, measured judgments and judicious asides shows that he is well read in all the fields discussed by Wohlfeil and has carefully incorporated their findings into his overall picture. This unassuming use of recent scholarship throughout enables him to avoid the danger of producing another stock biography and to provide a more subtle and reflective set of standards against which to measure Luther.

In *The Seeing Eye: Hermeneutical Phenomenology in the Study of Religion* (177pp, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, £10.10, 0 271 00291 3) Walter L. Brennenman, Jr and Stanley O. Yarian, in association with Alan M. Olson, bring the philosophical approach and methods of Heidegger and Husserl, and of Mircea Eliade and Gerardus van der Leeuw in the study of religion, to bear on myth, religious practice, art, and ritual, and in a critique of the experiences and

## Intelligence quotient

David Hunt

BASIL COLLIER:  
Hidden Weapons: Allied Secret or Undercover Services in World War II  
386pp. Hamish Hamilton. £15.  
0 241 10788 1

The experienced reader, when starting on a book whose sub-title is "Allied Secret or Undercover Services in World War II", will look first at the bibliography. What it omits is as important as what it includes. Basil Collier passes this test: there is no Farrago, and no Stevenson. F. W. Winterbottom's *The Ultra Secret* appears, but the introduction gives explicit warning of its unreliability. In compensation there is a well-chosen selection of official histories. One of them, *The Defence of the United Kingdom*, is by Mr Collier himself. It has remained a standard work since it appeared in 1957, for as an intelligence officer with the RAF he was acquainted with the full range of information available, including that derived from the decipherment of enemy signals.

For the inadequacies of pre-war intelligence Treasury parsimony gets the blame; but, with the exception of the German Abwehr officer Paul Thammell, agents provided little enough information even during the war when money was provided lavishly and often misapplied. Photographic reconnaissance and the decipherment of signals were far more important. When action was joined information from prisoners and from captured documents provided the essential basis for intelligence in the field, since without it the army at least would have been hard put to it to understand the signals which the cryptologists deciphered. It is sensible

then to concentrate on what is now comprehended under the conventional term ULTRA.

As might be expected, the chapter on the Battle of Britain is particularly good; it refutes in detail the "popular legend" that the decipherment of Enigma traffic was of much help to the Air Ministry or to Fighter Command. On the basis of his own knowledge Collier also shows that the battle was not centrally controlled; as Air Chief Marshal Dowding acknowledged, he trusted his group commanders and his staffs and gave most of his attention to preparations to meet the night attacks which he seldom visited the operations room except to show it to a distinguished visitor. The same battle also showed up the fallacy of the Air Ministry's pre-war theory that air forces should operate independently and could deliver a knock-out blow. The Luftwaffe was designed for that "army co-operation" which true Trenchardians despised, a fact known to many people though, as Collier records, they were not allowed to say so. When the Luftwaffe found itself, to its surprise, on the Channel it had a go at independent bombing, German bombs being good at improvisation; but its efforts were no more decisive than were the longer-lasting ones of Bomber Command.

Soundly reliable on all air operations, this book is readable and comprehensive on other aspects also. There is a good account of operations in France in 1940, of the Russian front and of the war in the Far East. For the sake of brevity I shall concentrate on the war in the Mediterranean. Intelligence in North Africa is adequately covered. The Greek campaign is an outstanding example of the value of full and timely information. Admittedly its only use - no small use indeed - was

to enable the British forces to withdraw skilfully with the fewest possible losses, a fact which may perhaps have inflated Jumbo Wilson's reputation as a general more than he deserved. The same scale of information was provided for Freyberg in Crete but was unavailing against the fanatical and sacrificial pressing of the attack by the Germans. Their total command of the air, as I can testify, was a crushing decisive factor. I think, too, that Freyberg may have felt inhibited in his tactical moves by Wavell's stem warning not to endanger the security of the great secret.

On Matapan, however, I think Collier exaggerates when he talks about "the excellence of the information furnished by signal intelligence". It was barely adequate. In fact, Admiral Cunningham, when he soiled, took a bet with his Staff Officer that there would be no encounter. To his credit, however, Collier dismisses with scorn the story about the beautiful spy who fished the Italian naval cipher.

The amphibious operations which resulted in the occupation of Sicily and the invasion of the Italian mainland are not easy to understand and Collier's criticisms of them are not always well based. It is not true that the enemy expected us to land at Salerno; the beaches north of Naples were thought more likely, but rejected by us (with memories of Crete) as being out of range of air cover. Nor was it all the object of ground in a northern Italian campaign was the aim of the strategy. But the fact that it is possible to differ respectfully on such matters is a proof of the general reasonableness and accuracy which Mr Collier has brought to his synopsis of wartime intelligence.

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The above represents a crude and all-too-brief summary of an extensive, complex analysis of "The Main Features and Foundations of British Appeasement Policy" (Schmidt's subtitle). As a mere review, it reduces whole sections of this book to a single sentence, and simplifies where the author has spent many pages in describing nuances, exceptions, and variations. In addition, there are many fine sections in Schmidt's study - on the workings of the Treasury, or the state of British industry, or the committee process - which are not dealt with here. Nevertheless, the preceding paragraphs should serve to indicate roughly the content, structure, and dimensions of this important book.

Does it possess any obvious defects? It must be said immediately that a book about "appeasement" policy, which does not cover the long history of that policy in 1939, Schmidt's defence will be that his concern has been to analyse the "defining factors" and the overall of politics within which British cabinets were operating, as they moved towards 1938, not to narrate the story of Anglo-German diplomatic negotiations and tensions, which is fair enough. Yet it will still leave some readers dissatisfied.

## The prophet as mouthpiece

James Barr

ROBERT P. CARROLL:  
From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah  
34pp. SCM. £8.50.  
0 334 02013 1

Robert P. Carroll started out with the aim of bringing up to date the classic study of the prophet Jeremiah by John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 1922. In due course it turned out that the book was more a re-orientation for Skinner, and indeed a thorough contrast with that scholar's ideas and methods. The Skinnerian approach suggested that, certain secondary materials being put aside, the book of Jeremiah is fairly direct evidence upon which the life and even the thoughts of the prophet can be reconstructed. Baruch was the secretary of the prophet but his work was directed by Jeremiah.

Against this older and essentially biographical approach, the present work depicts the book of Jeremiah as a collection of the shape of which is basically determined by the ideology of the "deuteronomists". They depict Jeremiah as the sort of person to be, thus very little of the material can be seen as the authentic personal expression of the prophet's soul in his encounter with God. The tradition about Baruch are not straight-forward historical evidence but give "fair indication of the scribal origins of the account". In Jeremiah 36 is a historical one; it has "all the marks of a dramatized encounter between king

and prophet" and is "a literary creation designed to incorporate scribal influence into the Jeremiah tradition".

This gives an adequate indication of the general line taken in the book. The deuteronomists and their ideology cannot be so disentangled from the final text of the book that an original Jeremiah can be discovered. The poems commonly known as the "confessions" of Jeremiah (the "author" prefers to call them "soliloquies") are not direct expressions of personal experience but are highly stylized products of literary convention; hence their similarity to Job and other works. Thus all the material is ideologically guided interpretation: "hermeneutic is everywhere and rules over all". As the title implies, the book does not tell us directly what Jeremiah was like; rather, it "uses" prophecy to secure its own ends.

Such an understanding is in general agreement with current trends in biblical interpretation. The documents are of such a nature, it seems, that one cannot get behind them to any more fundamental facts: everything is seen through the screen of later interpretation, and all the scholar can do is to add his own layer of hermeneutical construction. But unlike those trends which tend to see the canonical and final interpretation optically, as if it was the best possible understanding and more or less given by God himself, this book, by depicting the canonical interpretation as dictated by "ideology", leaves the reader with a more pessimistic, if more realistic, impression. The author does not view ideology neutrally as a mere necessity, neither good nor bad; he depicts it rather negatively, as a closed system which prevents understanding and sub-

stitutes abuse for reasoning and insight for understanding. Deuteronomistic ideology is, it seems, far from a perfect revelation of the divine. If the book of Jeremiah is as completely dominated by ideology as this analysis suggests, it is far from a praiseworthy model for the modern understanding to follow. It is not surprising, therefore, that the author finds himself constrained to add an appendix which discusses, rather inconclusively, what possible relevance the prophetic book might have for today.

And this seems to be the central weakness of the book. It really has too simple and uniform a scheme to sustain a rather long discussion including a lot of material. There are a number of good and interesting ideas, such as that of the prophet as actor in a dramatic spectacle. The author is right and realistic in seeing that certain common characterizations of the prophetic word, such as those that describe it as a "hammer" or as a "fire", are theological and theoretical but do not fit with the actuality of many prophetic assertions. On the whole, however, the book seems less the product of fresh detailed research on Jeremiah, and more the re-description of the material under the overarching concept of its ideologically determined character. The style sometimes becomes incongruously aphoristic, as when we are told that "great men or geniuses seldom like one another"; and the occasional invocations of comparisons with classical figures like Socrates, Diogenes and Pyrrho are also incongruous. There is a large body of notes at the end and also a further appendix which gives a useful survey of the main books on Jeremiah in English.

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# In all probability

D. Z. Phillips

**RICHARD SWINBURNE:**  
Faith and Reason  
206pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press. £16.  
0 19 824663 3

Readers of Richard Swinburne's *The Coherence of Theism and The Existence of God* will know that he believes that arguments can show belief in God to be not inherently self-contradictory, and that evidence shows the belief to be probably a true belief. The third part of Professor Swinburne's trilogy is concerned to show how these judgments of probability bear on religious faith. It is unclear whether, apart from "truths whose negation involves self-contradiction, he accords other than degrees of probability to anything else. Actually, we begin with certainties which show themselves in our actions. Doubts and probabilities come later.

But, for Swinburne, belief in God is belief in what is merely probable. Despite all his careful rules, which are to govern the investigation of such belief, it remains an investigation of probabilities: "It involves acting on the assumption that 'God will do for us what we want or need, where there is some danger that he may not'. Does this do justice to the idea of a God with whom 'there is no variability or shadow or turning'? It has been said, with good reason, that Swinburne has, in his twentieth-century Cleanthes. For him, the same standards of rationality apply to religion as elsewhere. He is opposed to what he calls 'split rationality'. Yet, these conclusions cannot be reached by noting that the same words appear in different contexts. The probability of the same word

does not entail the presence of the same concept. Neither are the conclusions necessary to account for the gain or loss of religious beliefs. Someone who chooses between God and Mammon does not do so according to common criteria in an assessment of probabilities. To turn from one to the other is not a matter of re-calculating, but of changing direction; a matter of conversion, one might say.

Swinburne is prevented from seeing this by his view of a moral action as one which is overall better to do than to refrain from doing. How could we show that a man who is happy because he is watching a pornographic film by himself, or because he has made men happier than the happiness of a man enjoying a drink in company or watching the performance of a great work of art? Swinburne replies, "That this is so can be seen by those of us capable of enjoying all such pleasures, comparing them for their worth." Does decency involve going in for such indecent comparisons and would the indecent man give Swinburne the answer Swinburne expects?

Religion, it is said here, offers deepest satisfactions because it offers them in an afterlife where, free from all limitations, they never end. Swinburne does not take seriously enough the arguments of those who have held that the finite character of human life is a condition of the intelligibility of the deepest satisfactions. It will not do simply to say that those who have pictured eternity as an unrelieved boredom have pictured "persons of limited idealism". This misses the logical point of the objections.

Still, given Swinburne's view of the ultimate goals religion offers us, how are they to be attained? The

role of creeds to be followed is to offer us a way of attaining these goals which is more probable than any alternative within the same or any other religion. Once again, difficulties arise for the survey of probabilities. A similarity of content may lead one to acknowledge the divine in different religions, but sometimes another's god, their deity in appeal, in either event, beyond the values involved in the conceptions of the divine. Swinburne does offer a further appeal, namely, the probable existence of God: "The man of religious faith is the man who has the theoretical conviction that there is a God." Thomist and Lutheran conceptions of faith, according to Swinburne, involve such a belief at least - a belief that God exists. But what does such a belief involve apart from an expression of religious faith? Belief in God must involve some affective state or attitude: "God is a Spirit and that which worships him must worship him in spirit and in truth." But not all believers are men of faith. The devils, as St James says, believe and shudder. According to Swinburne, Aquinas uses this quotation to show that the devils have faith. All that is shown is that the devils believe, and belief may range, as Norman Malcolm has said, from love and adoration to rebellion and hate.

What of the ultimate destiny of all men? Why, if God is good, does he not reward all men with Heaven regardless of their desires? Swinburne says that God will not ignore man's free will even to secure an eternal destiny for him. Yet, if a person has lived wrongly through a wrong assessment of probabilities, why hold him against him now that the assessment game is over? Even if he has flow in face of the probabilities, why not tell him to forget it? To get out of these, and related difficulties, Swinburne suggests that "Heaven is

Swinburne describes those philosophers who deny that religious faith entails holding a theoretical conviction that there is a God, as having a pragmatist view of faith. This depiction is misleading. Curiously, he puts William James and Kierkegaard in this same category. What Swinburne does is to reinterpret these views within the confines of his own presuppositions; they become matters of acting as if there is a God without actually believing that there

is. Someone holding these views "worships, not necessarily because he believes that there is a God who deserves worship, but because it is very important to express gratitude whom to be grateful and there is some chance that there is". Of course, this would be grotesque account of attempts by Kierkegaard and more recent philosophers of religion to distinguish between the religious belief in God and the philosophers' "belief that". But one cannot expect accuracy from Swinburne on these issues since he finds "most modern writing on this issue almost unbelievably unclear".

His man of faith makes his own salvation a goal. Swinburne wants to resist the accusation that this involves selfishness. The point of the accusation, made by myself and others, lies in the fact that a man does not save his soul by making his soul's salvation an aim; that way lies Pharisaeism. Swinburne misses the point when he offers the defence that "my own salvation can never be in competition with anyone else's well-being". The difficulty is in the very conception of the salvation: "You seek your own salvation partly by forwarding that of others." What should be said is that forwarding the salvation of others is, in part, one's salvation.

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not primarily a reward for good actions but a home for good people. There is an internal relation between a man's character and his being in Heaven. Even if Heaven were made of crystal clear to the wicked they would not enjoy being there. It is the calculus of probabilities at this stage. Why, then, does Swinburne worry about the infinite punishment meted out in Hell for finite evil? Why should there not be an internal relation between a man's desires and his being in Hell, since "such persons have ceased to be persons capable of enjoying Heaven"? If Heaven is the home of the good why is not Hell the home of the wicked, with everyone enjoying being at home, just as on earth the audience for a photographic film may prefer to be there rather than at Stratford?

Of his trilogy, Swinburne says his conclusions by and large are to justify "conclusions by rigorous and careful arguments". This aim is pursued, however, within unquestioned philosophical assumptions. Unfortunately, rigour is lacking at those crucial points on which there is radical disagreement in contemporary philosophy of religion. Swinburne cannot be relied on to give an account of views he disagrees with radically which would be recognizable to the adherents of those views.

Swinburne's pilgrim, Mr. Al. Things-Considered, has to justify the character of his pilgrimage, ultimately, in terms of the balance of probabilities he meets on life's journey. Such accounting for the rationality of moral beliefs promises as little as such accounting for the rationality of religious beliefs. In this latter realm, there are signs of the whole enterprise being abandoned. Considering the probabilities, only a reckless man would entertain such a hope with regard to contemporary philosophy of religion.

## Limited affirmations

J. L. Houlden

**A. E. HARVEY (Editor):**  
*God Incarnate: Story and Belief*  
105pp. SPCK. £3.95.  
0 281 03832 5

After all the hullabaloo over *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 1977, it is remarkable how little effectively reasoned defence the classical Christological doctrine has received. The immediate riposte, *The Truth of God Incarnate*, was, in its most forthright contributions, assertive rather than carefully argued. The more formal debate, published in *Incarnation and Myth*, 1979, did not always make it easy to tell who among the contributors was on which side, and often the discussion seemed to have shifted away from the original issue: God incarnate or not?

That trend has continued. There has been in effect a shying away from the full-blown doctrine. Among writers presenting themselves as orthodox, there is often a sense or even a claim that other ways of stating belief about Christ, usually a good deal vaguer and weaker, are "as good as" that doctrine; or else a candid admission that change has taken place in belief and sensibility, even though it is alleged that the essence of former faith has been preserved. So the development of ideas seems to be inexorable, engulfing us all alike. New questions and new groupings of ideas will not depart at anyone's bidding. Christians have to give some positive account of other religions if they are to retain intellectual, even moral, credibility. They have to reframe their commitment to Jesus if they are not to deny our present intense historical interest - and of course many of them have done so, like it or not, with results for their Christianity.

The effect is that what is claimed to be a doctrine of incarnation is really something different: such as a belief in the centrality of Christ or a strong sense of his distinctiveness or his persistent compelling power. If a number of publications of the past few years are anything to go by, *The Myth* has won a kind of victory by omission. While the authors of that work chiefly raised questions and pointed to difficulties in the traditional doctrine, others (such as James Mackey and Edward Schillebeeckx) have concentrated more on positive statement; but there is not much to choose between them when it comes to essential ideas.

Most of these essays from a group of Oxford scholars exemplify the point. Two of them do not: that by Geza Vermes is historical and is not concerned to make a Christian theological case; and that by Rachel Treitel makes no pretence at a theological argument which meets the questions at issue - it is an affirmation of orthodox faith in terms of an appreciation of the Gospels in some sense timeless narratives.

The other contributors, however, do not bypass the twin claims of historical investigation and doctrinal affirmation. Like the writers of *The Myth* and others involved in recent debate, their aim is to bring the two into a satisfactory relationship. James Barr does not exactly display his doctrinal hand, but concentrates on some of the factors governing the investigation of Christological problems; given the nature of the biblical documents and their use. Indeed, if there is unity in these essays it is in considering the necessarily historical character of the material.

Whether any of them affirms that Jesus amounts to a belief in God incarnate, that is, if the expression is taken in anything like the sense originally intended by such language in Christian discourse. It is language that belongs to the periods of Nicene and Chalcedon. Yet in so far as they attend to historical material in any detail, these essays confine themselves to the New Testament period. This is a pity when the

language of their title (and hence?) belongs to a theology whose critical investigation, with equally acute sensitivity to its historical setting, is essential to their enterprise.

If the argument that "God incarnate" is the best way to characterize belief about Jesus which will stand up to scrutiny seems to be elusive, other related themes receive a useful airing. John Macquarrie examines the associations, the virtues and the limitations involved in the once popular attempt to widen the question of Jesus by talking of "the Christ-event". In another essay, he brings out well the status of the Gospels as portraits of Jesus, that is, accounts which succeed precisely because they do not reproduce the mere history of Jesus but, akin to works of art, expose "the essence of the original, so that there takes place

the event of faith, the setting forth in unconcealedness of the fundamental meaning and reality of the original".

Nearest to the heart of the matter is the pair of essays on the New Testament evidence by Anthony Harvey and Geza Vermes. The former gives a notably lucid estimate of the state of play in New Testament scholarship on the subject of the historical Jesus and holds that the Jesus accessible to us in history can sustain the belief invested in him as the authoritative one from God. For Vermes, he cannot and could not possibly sustain that belief.

These writers sidestep the questions which the doctrine of Jesus as God incarnate was meant to settle once for all: the questions of his absolute uniqueness and of his exclusive place in the drama of human salvation. Without facing problems

which *The Myth* at least had the courage to raise (what about such Christology in the light of the other major religions and a human race imperfectly evangelized but the creation of a loving God?), they tell us of the powerful effect of Jesus in ages subsequent to his earthly life, of his outstanding authority and of the extraordinary and unparalleled concentration of the claims so quickly made for him. But that, as it is said, is something else.

The title points to a belief that narrative can somehow lead one to conviction in a high metaphysical style. The fashionable attention to "story" as a way of stating religious truth has much to commend it: it gets away from the artificiality of metaphysical structures which never lifted well alongside the Gospels, and it recognizes that Christian

theology involves reflection on the narration of events. But it is no good pretending that "story" will do the rigorous and precise work that the classical metaphysical theology did. It is bound to leave more scope for wide-ranging interpretation, and it is much harder to know when to shut the door.

It was a good idea to end with the Dean of Durham's Christmas sermon for 1981. Eloquent, it epitomizes the several dimensions of the discussion and puts it in the perspective of faith (in the face of the formidable architecture of his cathedral). Peter Baelz preaches what needs to be preached: that faith is the issue and that lofty metaphysical claims may only give the false impression that somehow assured knowledge can dispense us from its risks.

## Easternizing the West

Geoffrey Parrinder

**NINIAN SMART:**  
*Beyond Ideology: Religion and the Future of Western Civilization*  
350pp. Collins. £9.95.  
0 00 215846 9

"A certain outlook, based on the complementarity of Buddhism and Christianity", is offered by Ninian Smart as a solution to modern ideological confusion. The choice of Buddhism may appear surprising, first because it has suffered more than any other religion in modern times, repressed in China and Tibet, overruled in Vietnam and North Korea and decimated in Kampuchea and Laos. But Buddhist ideas have

made a distinctive mark in the Western world, notably California, through whether the Buddha or his successors would have recognized much that passes for the religion there is hardly considered. Secondly, Islam is a more powerful and growing religion, but it is dismissed here in a few references and the easy phrase "the tragedy of Islam is its very clarity".

Buddhism has long been one of Professor Smart's special interests, for its philosophy more than for its rituals and sects, and he expounds it in these Gifford Lectures for 1979-80 with skill and sympathy. In face of Marxist and secular rejections of all religion, Christianity is shown to be concerned with the material world and to have a critical attitude which favours science, while Buddhist philosophy balances realism and idealism in an analytic, temper which seems subtly modern. Smart ranges across the worlds of religions and ideologies, with countless names and references, and there are few scholars who could write with such knowledge of the great religions or keep pace with his breathless journeyings. There are unusual comparisons. Mahayana Buddhism, with its innumerable Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, temples, images and rituals, has often been compared with Roman Catholicism, but Smart likens it to "the Protestant spirit", chiefly because loving adoration, *bhakti*, for celestial beings may be reminiscent of the warm piety of some Protestant revival movements. The fervour of Catholic and Orthodox devotion and mysticism is hardly mentioned. The liberal critical work of modern Protestantism is recognized, yet it has no parallel in Mahayana.

After opening sketches of the world's religions and ideologies in tension, Smart gives his reflections on Christianity as seen by Buddhism, "from Adam's Peak", and Buddhism as Christians have seen it. Concepts of God and the soul are fundamentally different, since the Buddhist scriptures criticize notions of personal deity and an apprehensive self that were current when they were composed. Yet there was a sense of the numinous even in Theravada Buddhism and its radical attack on ideas of substance have led to its being called "pure mysticism".

contemplative in character and with a purification of consciousness that sought perception of the transcendent.

Hurried and popular, even "pop", Smart's sketches of Christianity are less fortunate. Jesus "called God 'Dad'" and "perhaps had 'some encounter with his heavenly Father' in the desert. The Lord's Supper for many Protestants is said to be 'a means of collectively affirming something of and mobilizing people's feelings', obscure and inadequate statements that perhaps result from Smart's "somewhat Catholic Anglican background". But how can one "bracket the Transcendent" or claim that "rituals enhance the substance of the divine Being"?

Secular ideologies, nationalist and Marxist, have become more or less a last mentioned only once in the last and Marx would have been more appropriate. Yet the loose style makes for fatal qualifications: Marxists are "for the most part totalitarian" and "not altogether very welcome to people". Christians are "relatively ruthless" but "not quite stable" and Japanese colonizers were "the cruelest, in a way".

The publishers claim that the author is "to his prose a poet", yet his style is repetitive, often confused and colloquial, seeming oral more than written. "Of course" is frequent, with neologisms like "interface" and "jibe with". We are said to live in a global city, a planetary world, a

kind". Is it an outward end visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace? The cover shows pictures of Christ, Buddha and Einstein although the last is mentioned only once in the text. Smart would have been more appropriate. Yet the loose style makes for fatal qualifications: Marxists are "for the most part totalitarian" and "not altogether very welcome to people". Christians are "relatively ruthless" but "not quite stable" and Japanese colonizers were "the cruelest, in a way".

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possible there), but perhaps California looks westwards more naturally than eastwards, so this book closes with something called "the Pacific Mind". From that ill-named ocean "may" (in another moral qualification) "be born that Pacific mind which balances dynamism with non-violence". If only it may, but recent tempers, from Korea to Kampuchea, are not encouraging.

This book is hardly "Beyond Ideology" or only concerned with "the future of Western Civilization", unless the East is written off or the West to be conquered by the Pacific Mind. The world-views of Buddhism and Christianity are propounded to go beyond collectivism and "flat secularism". Christianity affirms personal identity in a way that while Buddhism looks to "the emptiness of the atoms of consciousness" through analysis and forms of yoga. Buddhism and Christianity are admittedly incompatible, "much at variance", and both will have to "undergo some radical restructuring", says Ninian Smart is right to show that the world has not done with these two great universal faiths.

## Theocratic economics

Lucy Mair

**WIM M. J. VAN BINBERGEN:**  
*Religious Change in Zambia: Exploratory Studies*  
423pp. Kegan Paul International. £18.  
0 7103 0000 X

Writers on change in African religion have tended to assume that Christianity encountered systems that had been unchanged from time immemorial. In 1970 the project was launched of a study in time-depth in Central Africa, of a kind which the increasing volume of historical and archaeological data was making possible. Wim van Binbergen was one of the first participants, and in *Religious Change in Zambia* he has put together a series of papers written over eight years, with an explanatory introduction.

He compares the many cults which coexist in present-day Zambia with geological strata, their sequence explicable in terms of ecology on the one hand and changes in modes of production on the other. Ancestor worship is taken for granted as basic; Van Binbergen is interested in cults with wider congregations than a kinship group. These begin with the neighbourhood rain-shrines of populations which doubtless at one time covered the whole region, with minimal political organization, and which in the past were divided by endemic feuding. Peace was imposed on them only at the time of the annual visit to the shrines to pray for rain. The Lundu conquerors who penetrated the region from 1500 onwards established their legitimacy by

claiming to control the rain, and created their own shrines where relics of their ancestors were preserved. They represent a transition from the domestic to the "tributary" mode of production. They could not everywhere impose a ritual monopoly, and in the south of Zambia they had to compromise with older shrine-priests calling themselves "owners of the land", a situation paralleled in many other parts of Africa.

With the penetration of capitalism and the consequent extension of the range of contacts comes a proliferation of new cults of different kinds. Cults of affliction, as Victor Turner named them, rest on the belief that certain illnesses are under the control of invisible but not personalized entities who send them as messages of individuals whom they wish to enlist in their service. Those who are cured become mediums of these beings and cure others to their turn. The cult-leaders are normally women, and it is they (of course) whom the adepts serve.

Theo there are witch-eradication cults, prophet cults, millennial cults. The Lumpa church of Alice Lenshina had aspects of all these. Van Binbergen regards her as the greatest prophetess whom Zambia has yet seen, and devotes his longest chapter to an interpretation of her movement. It was founded in 1955, and within three years had a following of some 65,000. Kaunda in his early days as President suppressed it by force. (A note for the times: the number of deaths, estimated at 1500, "far exceeded that of the general clashes between the colonial government and the nationalists in 1961".) Van Binbergen describes the Lumpa church as "a peasant movement defying peasantization". Peasants are

defined in many different ways. By one definition, African farmers have always been peasants; by another, a peasant, as distinguished from a farm labourer, is dependent on a landlord for access to the means of production and must accept the terms he offers. This does not describe the relation between chiefs and peasants in Zambia. Lenshina renamed her village Sioni, Pilgrims flocked to it bringing offerings, and some stayed and cultivated crops which Lenshina sold on behalf of the church. With the proceeds she organized a chain of stores, and bought trucks which were used partly to transport her choir about the country. Van Binbergen describes her organization as a theocratic mode of production. He also observes that the church's income was based on the extraction of surplus value from branch members for the benefit of those at headquarters, with the result that a class-like division was developing among them. Since, he argues, the movement was put down before it had attained its aim, "problems that called it into being... were not solved, and other similar movements are bound to arise". But is it not part of the logic of Zambia's transition from capital to socialism that they are about to be suppressed?

The British Council of Churches, 2, Eaton Gate, London SW1W 9BL, is the UK distributor. *The World Council of Churches since 1975* (120pp. Geneva: World Council of Churches. £2.75. 2 8254 0708 9), an expressly informal account of the history and programmes of the WCC in recent years.

## Creation and disclosure

Donald M. MacKinnon

**MAURICE WILES:**  
*Faith and the Mystery of God*  
146pp. SCM. £4.50.  
0 334 00447 0

Maurice Wiles has written a short but extremely interesting book, which deserves extended discussion. In his preface he claims to be writing more personally about Christian faith, as he apprehends it, than he would naturally have chosen to do. The result is certainly positive and constructive, as clearly he hoped that it might be; if he is always a man of acutely critical intelligence, he reveals himself in these pages as unable to argue boldly in defence of a faith that is obviously very precious to him. Although this is a short book, it is packed with allusions, which display the depth of the writer's reflection and the range of his reading.

In the second chapter he introduces his central theme, namely that the language of faith, quite as much as that of poetry, creates as well as discloses. Much of the book may be regarded as a series of variations on this central theme, beginning in the next chapter with a closely argued and well illustrated discussion of "claims of identity" in the language of faith. Here the reader is quickly taken on his way from discussion of W. K. Wimsatt's comment on Coleridge's description of the excellence of Shakespeare as consisting in a "universal and interpenetration of the universal and the particular" to reference to the treatment of statements implying identity in Evans-Pritchard's account of Nuer religion. The chapter concludes with four examples of the lessons learnt in various areas, including that of Christology, where there is also an examination of the parable of the sheep and the goats, which introduces the concept of parable into the whole argument of the book in which

it plays a central role. Professor Wiles seems to regard this allegory as primarily concerned, in its setting in Matthew 25, with the judgment to be expected by the nations in respect of their response to the Christian community. But this does not in his view make it illegitimate to follow popular practice and give the parable the force rather of a directive to the moral imagination. Yet in his comments here Wiles seems to ignore the note of devastating irony which is sounded in this allegory and helps to give it the searching, interrogative quality it undoubtedly possesses. It may be that we touch here on an example of the central weakness of the whole book.

In discussing the topic of parable in general terms, Wiles draws on the work of E. B. Eynon, for whom a successful parable is an event in a double sense: it creates a new possibility in the situation, and it compels the person addressed to a decision. A few pages later he suggests that the suffering of Christ should be viewed as a parable in this double sense, and not as an act of vicarious penitence, as they are treated by familiar critics, to which the notion of vicarious penitence has been subjected, and it is clearly his view that the sort of conceptual enlargement involved in the development of this admittedly paradoxical notion is the suffering of Christ should be viewed as a parable in this double sense, and not as an act of vicarious penitence, as they are treated by familiar critics, to which the notion of vicarious penitence has been subjected, and it is clearly his view that the sort of conceptual enlargement involved in the development of this admittedly paradoxical notion is the suffering of Christ should be viewed as a parable in this double sense, and not as an act of vicarious penitence, as they are treated by familiar critics, to which the notion of vicarious penitence has been subjected, and it is clearly his view 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# The proprietor's cut

G. E. Mingay

MANUEL LE ROY LADURIE  
AND JOSEPH GOY:  
The Agrarian History from the  
Fourteenth to the Nineteenth  
Centuries  
Translated by Susan Burke  
206pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£17.50.  
0 521 23974 5

Agriculture was overwhelmingly the dominant activity in the pre-industrial economy of Europe, employing directly or indirectly the great majority of the people. What happened in farming was of crucial significance to national wealth, living standards and population growth. Yet agrarian historians have been unable to do more than guess at the levels and changes in farm output, even for a period so relatively recent as that of the classic "agricultural revolution". For the era before governments began the systematic collection of agricultural statistics historians have had to base their suppositions on fragmentary materials regarding acreages, yields, rents and livestock numbers which may not be of all representative or to deduce probable trends from somewhat unsatisfactory data of prices and uncertain estimates of population and levels of

consumption. Lacking firm national figures for output, historians have perforce concerned themselves with other questions which the records might answer - with limited local investigations of land ownership, enclosure and techniques.

So it is evident that any new means of determining the broad movement of agricultural output is of the first importance. For a considerable number of years now a large group of agrarian historians, mainly French, have been endeavouring to supply this need, using figures calculated from the annual value of the tithe paid by farmers to ecclesiastical and lay proprietors. The original stimulus of this great research effort came from Ernest Labrousse, who stressed the potential significance of the investigation of agricultural fluctuations during the *ancien régime*, and who emphasized the social relevance of statistical analysis, pointing to the human sensitivity underlying the figures. "The shock experienced by the peasant" subject to wide variations in output and prices, A 1969 conference of French economic historians produced valuable discussions of the relationship between tithe and agricultural production, and further conferences widened the area of study, involving more than sixty researchers from seventeen countries.

Prominent from the early days of

this movement were Joseph Goy and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie: they edited the papers of the 1969 conference, and the latter had already utilized long series of tithe accounts in his classic study, *Les Paysans de Languedoc* (1966). Now they have cooperated to produce the terse and concentrated discussion reviewed here, which serves as an up-to-date report on the project and its findings. The book falls into two distinct sections, with Part I by Goy concerned with the methodology of the research, and Part II by Le Roy Ladurie (with the collaboration of Marie-Jeanne Tili-Dieuville) providing a comparative study of the trends in agriculture revealed by the tithe evidence.

The fundamental assumption of the research is that if a long run of tithe accounts is available, and any changes over the period in the titheable acreage and the rate at which the tithe was levied are known, then exactly reflect the gross output of the agriculture concerned. The figures can be charted on a graph and the resultant curve will indicate the general trend of production. So far, so simple. But all historical sources have their problems, and the tithe is no exception. In the first place, the documentary materials are much superior in regions of France, Spain and Italy to those available in

northern Europe (including Britain), where, apart from the scarcity of suitable runs of records, the frequent commutation of the tithe to a money payment makes the relationship between tithe and output more difficult to ascertain. The same problem, it may be said, also applies to southern Europe, where, although the records are more plentiful and easier to use, the tithe was often leased out for a period of years, and the researcher has to compile a local price index in order to convert the money payments into quantities of crops.

Then there are difficulties arising from fraud, from the effects of wars, religious movements, population changes, insecurity in the countryside and peasant resistance to the payment itself. As a result some French specialists have expressed their doubts and reservations, though "over-qualification and hyper-criticism can sterilize" certain subjects by concentrating on negative conclusions. "... we do not think one should expect too much of quantitative history, but neither should one reject it".

The justification is basically that, despite all the weaknesses of the tithe material, where there is almost complete ignorance any evidence, even if imperfect, is better than none. And, with the richness of their archives, French historians have been able to subject the material to critical analysis and use only the best of the returns. There remains, however, the question of what is actually being measured. The answer to this is, principally, cereals, for there is often insufficient data, even in southern Europe, to measure livestock, wine production or sometimes even maize - though of course these were in some regions the peasants' main or sole support of life.

What, then, are the trends in cereal output that the tithe reveals? With a little more taken from a variety of scattered regions in different countries it is not surprising that the curves are not all of a piece. However, Ladurie detects trends from his data which he is able to arrive at broad conclusions. Thus, from a high level reached in the early fourteenth century, between the 1330s and 1420 cereal production declined drastically, by some 50 per cent, though as population fell still more the result was actually an increase in

supplies per head. The sixteenth century, more precisely the period from 1460 to 1560-1600, was marked by expansion almost everywhere, though, although the recovery was forced by the Black Death. But population was also expanding, and at a faster rate, so that prices rose, and wages declined and farms became smaller; some privileged areas, however, saw diversification into stock-breeding, viticulture and market gardening.

There was, Ladurie continues, a "general European crisis" about 1640-50 - the result of wars, taxes, weather conditions and revolutions - but generally the tithe evidence shows the seventeenth century to have been one of stability, with even some periods of expansion in certain regions. A distinct increase in agricultural production began after 1690 in Spain and after 1715 in France; but elsewhere, as in Hungary and Brittany, there was stagnation, while growth slowed down or stopped in 1750-60 in Spain, Portugal, and to some extent in Italy. But generally production in the eighteenth century at least rose above the levels of 1320-40, though in terms of output per head the end-result was less happy: this after all was the age of Malthus.

The broad European picture which Ladurie has brilliantly constructed from the diverse regional studies of many scholars is not perhaps the most valuable outcome of this body of research. It may be too easy to produce such a picture where there is still much to discover - and not solely from the tithe records. The component elements of the picture need multiplication, elaboration and explanation; and since each region had its peculiarities of physical resources, climate, population growth, land ownership and agrarian customs detailed study at the local level may do more for our understanding of the past than any heroic attempt to create a global view, however interesting. Meanwhile, the research goes on, and Goy concludes his section of the book with a brief but challenging list of areas and aspects which require further investigation: this represents, as he says, "an immense programme of work, which presupposes new, collective research on the part of historians of agrarian societies all over the world".

## LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

# Imagining the past

A. S. Byatt

MARY LASCELLES:  
The Story-Teller Retrieves the Past  
196pp. Oxford University Press. £9.75.  
0 19 812802 9

Mary Lascelles writes, she tells us, out of a recognition of her own "secret bias, an undercurrent drawing interest and curiosity in a particular direction". She ascribes such a "bias" to all teachers and scholars who have worked "over long years", and finds hers in the working of the imagination of the story-teller and his audience. More precisely, she is interested in the analysis of the way both have imagined the past. Her book has the authority of her years of scrupulous scholarship, combined with the relaxed, personal, conversational tone of a writer at ease with her own material. The reader of this book receives the impression that its author is returning, with wisdom and insight, to the sources of her own imaginative life, the writers who provided the energy for a lifetime given to books and reading.

The authors in whose work Mary Lascelles looks for the imagination of the past are Scott, Stevenson and Kipling. With Stevenson she sets the highest value on the spoken and written records. As Miss Lascelles points out, both Scott and Stevenson were trained lawyers, able to read facts, a real reported speech, in legal records.

In "A Sense of the Past" Miss Lascelles moves from records to something more tenuous - the kind

of "dreaming" with which Stevenson carried on the work of inventing *Kidnapped* so that he felt he knew his people, observed their life. She shows how well he calls up the past in the landscape and the language in which the tug between the Highland and Lowland of Alan and David is embodied. She also, comparing Scott and Stevenson as Scots to Kipling as an Englishman, distinguishes between "scenery" in Scott and landscape as history in Kipling. In England, she claims, "an undisturbed village is a piece of history... English shapes of field or copse... to the ear in their names, of a past reaching back further than history." Whereas in Scotland cultivation and buildings are relatively new, what speaks is the history of the people, the Scots knowledge of family and national history, the life of past events in living men. This distinction takes one a long way with both writers and reader.

The next two chapters deal with the re-creation, or invention, of his-

torical events. In the first, Miss Lascelles compares *The Heart of Midlothian* and *Weir of Heriot* as novels derived from, woven round, full historical accounts of real events - and again discusses the tension between the romantic need to ameliorate with happy escapes and the tragic compulsion to tell grim truths. In the second she compares *Redgauntlet* and *Heir of Redgauntlet* to the latter, Scott, she claims, by creating the history of the Redgauntlet family, living in the present failures already past - the Stuart failures - demonstrates, as Thackeray with his irony and his emphasis on sexual betrayal does less effectively, the fact that "Time, not folly or mischance, has vanquished the last Pretender." Both Scott and Thackeray invent a return of the Pretender to dramatize a reading of history they believe in. So does Kipling in *Harold of England*, "The Tree of Justice", which ends this chapter. These are instances of the weaving of fictitious insight with real history: the elucidation of the past by rewriting

the past, to a discussion of the invention of a fiction.

of "dreaming" with which Stevenson carried on the work of inventing *Kid-*

# Old yarns respun

John Batchelor

MICHAEL TIMKO, FRED KAPLAN  
AND EDWARD GUILLANO (Editors):  
Dickens Studies Annual: Volume 9,  
Essays on Victorian Fiction  
310pp. New York: AMS Press.  
0 404 18529 0

One would like to stress the sub-title to this volume, since the best things in this lively and varied collection are the non-Dickens pieces. Robert A. Colby's "Vanity Fair on Stage and Screen" describes with relish a novel called *Vanessa*, which was created at its first night by the discerning citizens of Montreal but then praised to the skies after it had moved south to New York, where the "gala atmosphere" in the auditorium could have provided Thackeray with another chapter for the *Book of Snobs*. The star of this show was the appalling and celebrated Minnie Fiske, who was then well into her thirties (Becky's early years were tacitly cut out of this dramatization); the vain and domineering Mrs Fiske appeared in the first filmed *Vanity Fair* in 1915 and went on playing Becky Sharp for thirty years, never noticing, it seems, that she had been type-cast. I would love to see that 1915 film, and I greatly regret the non-fruition of David Selznick's desire in the 1950s to make a *Vanity Fair* which would compete with *Gone with the Wind*. Selznick believed that Margaret Mitchell had deliberately modelled her novel on Thackeray's, and that if Scarlett O'Hara was based on Becky Sharp then an even more successful movie could be made by going back to the original. It would have been a faithful and intelligent realization; Colby remarks that Selznick was unique among directors of adaptations of *Vanity Fair* in that he had actually read the book. Books, and the fastidious fuss-pots who still read them, are firmly put in their place by the reviewer of a musical *Vanity Fair* presented at Cape Cod in 1969, who described Thackeray's "old yarn" as "a familiar title, but no longer a much read classic".

Elsewhere in this volume a book-reviewing modesty persists. There is a careful, sensitive essay on *Mary Barton* by Rosemarie Bodenheimer; she takes due notice of the "split" in the novel's sympathies, but stoutly defends its "concrete account of the dignity, and the historical integrity, of working class life". And there is reading of a vigorous and opinionated kind in William E. Buckler's essay on *Harriet*. This item is intelli-gent but disarmingly narrow-minded, suggesting a nasty outbreak of Leavisism on the other side of the Pond. Buckler's desire to make Hardy the absolute test of literary and moral integrity reads like a bad parody of Leavis on Lawrence. Hardy is "like the Bible and like Shakespeare" and therefore, presum-

ably, fit reading-matter for a desert island: "How well we do with Hardy as a predictor of how well we do with literature itself", and "being a great man of letters, Hardy is a privileged access route to the very meaning of literary greatness". The word "great" appears far too often in this piece. Hardy is great, but we can discover that for ourselves, and Buckler could have devoted more space to his ostensible purpose, the review of important critical books on Hardy in the 1970s. He is judicious on the books by Ian Gregor and Tom Paulin and lively on the "exasperating" features of Donald Davie's *Thomas Hardy*. And it is incredible that there is no reference at all to John Bayley's *An Essay on Hardy* (1978) which is surely just as important as the books he has chosen to discuss.

Among the Dickens pieces Robert

Newson's survey of recent Dickens studies is much more catholic than Buckler's on Hardy; studies, though here too the creak of the Lancelotti thumbscrew is audible; Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie's biography of Dickens, we are told, is a book that "the scholar and general reader alike

may safely leave unopened". Arlene M. Jackson writes interestingly on Agnes Wickfield and the church imagery in *David Copperfield*, though it is a pity that she has not taken note of John Carey's mischievous suggestion that Agnes "poisoning upwards" is actually pointing to the bedroom and is therefore not necessarily the stereotyped master virgin that critics of the novel have tended to perceive. And an article which devotes itself in specific detail to features of ecclesiastical buildings really ought to refer airily to the "spires of Canterbury Cathedral". That noble building has Bell Hardy and a hint of a spire anywhere. Sandra K. Young writes well on the rhetoric of *Bleak House* (though the method leans rather heavily on that of Robert Garis's *The Dickens Theatre*) and there is a good essay on *Barnaby Rudge* and the nature of the historical novel by John P. McGowan. For good value, though, none of these can compete with Colby on the dramatizations of *Vanity Fair*; instances of unbounded and pungent vulgarity which Thackeray himself would have loved.

# Inside the imperialists

Peter Keating

JOHN A. McCLURE:  
Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial  
Fiction  
182pp. Harvard University Press.  
£11.55.  
0 674 50529 8

"It would be interesting for science", the doctor says to Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, "to watch the mental changes of individuals on the spot, but..." Marlow interrupts the sentence, believing he understands, though of course he doesn't. "It is only by experiencing the Congo for himself, becoming in the process observer and self-observer, scientist and specimen, that Marlow can fully appreciate the doctor's gentle warning: 'The changes take place inside, you know'."

John McClure refers to this passage from *Heart of Darkness* several times in his study of the colonialist in the early work of Kipling and Conrad, and understandably so. Both writers were fascinated, like Marlow's doctor, by the psychological pressures endured by colonialists; both writers had personal experience of imperialism at work and were capable of describing it from the inside. Reviewers in the 1890s often linked Kipling and Conrad together, regarding them as having "opened up for the reader new and exciting areas of modern life". In *Kipling and Conrad* McClure recognizes the "similarity of Leavis on Lawrence. Hardy is 'like the Bible and like Shakespeare' and therefore, presum-

from each other. He decides, not surprisingly, that Kipling supported imperialism and Conrad opposed it.

The main explanation for this is seen as biographical: at every stage of his life Kipling was brought up to reverence authoritarian power, to be a member of the governing class of empire, while Conrad, as a Polish victim of Russian imperialism, associated himself with the oppressed. With this position firmly established, there is little McClure can do except elaborate and defend it, and in spite of his admiration for both writers, the complexity of their work is eventually sacrificed to the needs of an inflexible thesis.

Kipling is easily adapted to such an approach: much of his work is politically more straightforward than Conrad's, and McClure is particularly good on the way in which *The Jungle Book* and *Kim* could be made to serve as educational texts for a new kind of Imperialist. But, the notorious ambiguity of Conrad's fiction traps McClure in his drive to find a consistent ideology. Kurtz becomes a "representative figure"; Marlow returns from the Congo a committed anti-imperialist; and in the discussion of *Nostromo* McClure's thesis simply falls apart. Conrad is, now, revealed as a profoundly pessimistic, anti-democratic, and even racist" as well as being "anti-capitalist". Conrad, we are assured, is "telling us that Latin Americans are 'inherently incapable of acting rationally'". It is hardly convincing evidence of racism: Conrad believed that about virtually everyone.

# The peasant's lot

L. R. Poos

JEROME BLUM (Editor):  
Our Forgotten Past: Seven Centuries  
of the Peasant in Europe  
240pp. with 256 illustrations, 54 in colour. Thames and Hudson. £12.50.  
0 500 25080 4

Both in popular imagination and still to a certain extent among the preconceptions of some modern historians, European rural society before industrialization consisted largely of relatively static, isolated, and self-sufficient local communities, bound together economically and emotionally by ties of mutual cooperation, neighbourliness, and common enterprise. The reality, of course, was very different, as a great deal of recent research by social historians (in England, often dubbed the "new social history") has demonstrated. European peasants seem almost invariably to have been profoundly stratified, and although some form of village assembly for "communal" self-regulation and decision-making was ubiquitous in both Eastern and Western Europe, so also were the dominance of the large and the marginality of the small; we search in vain for village democracy or egalitarianism. Just as constant as rivalries within peasant communities were disputes with landlords and states over obligations and rights, usually small-scale wars of attrition and only occasionally assuming dramatic proportions as riots or genuine revolts.

The great virtues of *Our Forgotten Past* are that its international group of contributors, as Jerome Blum explains in his introduction, have tried to give the general reader an outline of recent specialist research into rural society in traditional Europe, and that most of the chapters attempt to deal equally with both Eastern and Western European contexts. The most important contributions are Professor Blum's own, on peasant families and communities, the nobility and the land, and the forces compelling serfdom toward emancipation; drawing on his previous research in Eastern Europe, these chapters are excellent. Topics of current debate among social historians such as the structure and function of peasant families, the ambiguous nature of peasant communal organization, and the radically different experiences of Eastern and Western Europe from the end of the medieval period, are adroitly summarized.

John Thirk's chapter on "The Rural Economy" is, despite its title,

really about changes in agricultural techniques and the role of "improving" farmers and experimenters, especially from the later seventeenth century onwards; and as such is heavily slanted toward Western Europe and particularly England. No subject than *Our Forgotten Past* is less fortunate than this little space has for the rural economy of the West before enclosure, or indeed of the large part of Europe left untouched by these innovations - especially as this was also where serfdom persisted into the nineteenth century. The gentleman farmer is given most of the stage here.

But what did peasants actually spend most of their time working at? This may be a surprisingly difficult question for historians to answer (except insofar as labour obligations to lords are concerned), but it also seems surprising that a book about "life on the land" should describe nearly everything about peasant life except this. This might have been remedied in Diederich Saalfeld's "The Struggle to Survive", but this chapter concerns itself with changes in vegetation, prices and wages, in vesting questions of diet and living often having to invoke urban to deal with the rural. These were among the most important components of peasant economies, but the history of the chapter itself. By contrast, Yves-Marie Beron's on "Rural Uprisings" and Jacqueline Simon on "Rural Folklore" are not only admirably readable, but also very effective in drawing general comparisons across national boundaries.

It may appear odd at first glance that William Parker's contribution on the North American farmer has been included in this book, but in fact it provides an effective transition between the chapters on earlier Europe. Parker's final chapter on the European peasant in the modern world, "The New Land to Settle", but above all an international agricultural market, set North on a completely divergent path from Europe; yet its very efficiency has meant that the US farming population has dwindled rapidly in this century; and the conflicting pressures of an enterprise both family-owned and operated, and heavily capitalized and mechanized, have paradoxically made the economic viability of many American farms

increasingly precarious in the 1980s. But the twentieth century was already well advanced before most European governments finally confronted wholesale agricultural reorganization, and the chronic collectivization of Eastern European collectivization represent merely one end of a wide spectrum of experiences as peasant economies were transformed.

This book is beautifully produced, in large format, and lavishly illustrated with everything from medieval depictions of ploughmen to a black Texas homestead in an endless "tracé" of landscape. It will undoubtedly appeal to the market for folksy nostalgia, but that should not deter readers from recognizing it as an informed and brilliant evocation of the rural past.

# The reaper's role

Pamela Horn

DAVID HOBSEASON MORGAN:  
Harvesters and Harvesting 1840-1900  
224pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.  
0 7059 1735 X

*Harvesters and Harvesting 1840-1900*, published posthumously, provides an interesting survey of changes in harvesting techniques during the second half of the nineteenth century. It emphasizes, too, the overall economic importance of harvest earnings to the labouring people of the country. David Morgan is principally concerned with conditions in the Oxfordshire and Berkshire, but his this. He describes the great variety of people recruited for harvest work and the different methods of piece-work payment which were adopted in order to remunerate them. While varied not only between localities but also according to the kind of labour relations; disputes between workers in the harvest field, and the customs and celebrations associated with this central feature of the farm-year are all examined. More could have been said about the role of mechanical harvesting, which by 1900 accounted for around 80 per cent of the British corn harvest, and the impact of falling cereal acreages upon rural life in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Questions concerning the storing and threshing

of the grain fall outside the scope of the survey.

There is much here to appeal to agricultural and social historians alike. Nevertheless, despite its merits *Harvesters and Harvesting 1840-1900* has three principal weaknesses. First, it is illustrated by a very large number of quotations, many of them making much the same point, and these often clog the text. Inevitably, transcription errors occur; some of them are not serious but others alter the meaning of the original. Second, some of the statistics quoted are misleading. For instance, we are told that in 1849 Oxfordshire had only twenty-five schools and Berkshire the source, which referred to schools "for which public provision" had "to some extent" been made, that is, grants. A true estimate, based on the 1851 educational census, reveals that about seven and ten times as many schools, respectively, in these two counties (excluding dame or private schools). With these misleading figures, Morgan's subsequent argument about educational provision in the two counties is itself inaccurate. Table 3.7, by averaging out the number of workers to the relatively rapid decline in the number of labourers vis-à-vis farmland, is misleading, in that it fails to draw attention to the wide differences in the size of labour forces in Buckinghamshire in 1851, to every farmer. Yet an examination

of the farm-holdings section of the census in that year shows that only a little over a fifth of farms in the county had ten or more men attached to them; between one-quarter and one-third employed only one to four men.

A third reservation is the fact that research for this book was conducted in the early 1970s and, if the bibliography is to be believed, has not been updated. More recent publications are thus neglected. Despite these flaws, *Harvesters and Harvesting 1840-1900* provides many valuable insights into a topic which, for all its great importance in rural life, has for long been neglected.

Revised versions of the papers presented at the symposium on "Research Methods in Historical Geography", held at the University of Cambridge in July 1972, have now been published under the editorship of Alan R. H. Baker and Mark Billinge. The volume, entitled *Period and Place: Research Methods in Historical Geography* (377pp. Cambridge University Press. £25. 0 521 24272 X), reflects the international composition of the symposium and includes a survey of historical geography in Israel by Y. Ben-Arieh, together with articles on "Reconstructing Old Prussian landscapes" by H. Jaeger, on "Land use and settlement patterns in the Malar area of Sweden" by U. Glimmer and on "Perceived space in Ancient Japan" by M. Sendo. Among more general topics covered are "Historical geography and Collingwood's theory of historical knowing" by L. Guelke,

# The reach of detail

Mark Casserley

R. B. J. WILSON:  
Henry James's Ultimate Narratives  
The Golden Bowl  
MUP. University of Queensland Press. £21.50.  
0 7022 1593 7

*The Golden Bowl*, as R. B. J. Wilson points out, has tended to bewilder critics. The nature of what happens in the novel is so hard to grasp, yet so binding in its effects, that the difficulties of analysis are not surprising. Wilson believes that some rather incomplete responses have resulted. In this book he removes some of the "implausible or obvious coats" from the novel, giving his own detailed analysis and assessment. He divides critics of the novel into three groups: those who take the Prince and Charlotte Stant as the main interest, those who see the Princess and Adam Verver as the centre of the book, and those more recent critics who seek to tackle the ambiguities of the novel's approach.

Wilson thinks that the "handsome wholeness of effect" James sought is more important than the interest attaching to any one character. He argues, from the nature of the authorial presence and the quality of alignment demanded of the reader, that the novelist is a discreet guide rather than an intrusive narrator; James is not asking the reader to suspend normal judgment, but coaxing him into delaying it. The reader must cultivate "exclusive empathy" with the characters rather than "exclusive sympathy" with any one of them. Much of this could obviously be said of any good novel, but Wilson's discussion of *Maggie* shows the benefits of the approach. Despite her central role in *Book Second*, she is not, Wilson believes, the chief figure in the drama, but the chief element in James's artistry. She acts as a focus for complex, delicate artistic processes, and this accounts for the rising intensity of the later chapters.

Wilson's analysis depends on his recognition of the authorial rhetoric at work. He discusses, for example, the continuous revision of the meaning of the word "strange" and its synonyms. These terms form an index of difficulty in the novel,

and, used ironically in Book First, come to denote the comprehensive interest" in Book Second.

James's style often excites in critics an urge to "decode" it and to discern a single, usable meaning. The "challenge to analysis" of which Wilson speaks is a challenge to allow multiple meanings. Wilson distinguishes between ambiguity and what he calls "multivalence", which seems to be ambiguity in an Empsonian sense - the novelist offers the widest possible range of implications, all of them significant.

The subtlety of James's style is also regarded as a means of invoking "our response to the strange incalculable mixtures of life". This follows from Wilson's view that James does not claim to know everything about his characters (despite his careful authorial control), which reduces the distinction between a completely knowable created character and the incomplete knowledge one has of other persons. There is a further distinction to be made, however, between mere incompleteness of information and what cannot be known. In the novel, there is a simulacrum of unknown.

Wilson's large claims for the novel (it is "radical", "original", and eventually "radically original") are based on the analysis of James's careful authorial "provisions"; these, he believes, enabled the novelist to reveal as much about the four main characters, and to provide as close a rendering of simultaneous attention to all the events, as coherent literary form permitted. The justification for these claims is largely rhetorical, and unlikely to convert non-messianic readers prepared to give *The Golden Bowl* the "patience of perusal" which James sought, Wilson succeeds, paradoxically, in presenting a unified view of the novel through close analysis of individual characters. For him, criticism of the novel is "all a question of the reach of detail", and he often conveys detailed points to a clear and pleasing manner: Fanny Assingham's chatter "echoes portentously in the authorial silence". His discussions of rhetorical techniques, the role of imagery, the suggestive use of physical objects - as a bridge between the figurative and the literal - and above all the mobility of the authorial vantage-point, all repay the reader who takes the novel up again.



# Hot on the trail of the Muse

William Scammell

## STEPHEN BERG:

With Akhmatova at the Black Gates  
68pp. University of Illinois Press  
(distributed in the UK by  
International Book Distributors). £6  
(paperback, £3). 0 252 00834 0

## LARRY LEVIS:

The Dollmaker's Ghost  
72pp. E. P. Dutton. \$10.25  
(paperback, \$6.25). 0 525 47662

## ROBERT HASS:

Praise  
68pp. Carcanet New Press. £2.95.  
0 85635 356 6

## MICHAEL VAN WALLEGHEM:

More Trouble with the Obvious  
68pp. University of Illinois Press  
(distributed in the UK by  
International Book Distributors). £6  
(paperback, £3). 0 252 00865 0

## CHAD WALSH:

Hang Me Up My Begging Bowl  
98pp. Ohio University Press/  
Pandemic (distributed in the UK by  
European Book Service). £7.20  
(paperback, £3). 0 252 00865 0

## JOHN ENGELS:

Vivid in Early Fall  
102pp. University of Georgia Press.  
\$8.50 (paperback, \$4.50).  
0 8203 0552 9

## DUANE NIATUM:

Songs for the Harvester of Dreams  
64pp. University of Washington  
Press (distributed in the UK by  
International Book Distributors). £4.  
0 295 95758 1

## RICHARD BLESSING:

A Closed Book  
78pp. University of Washington  
Press (distributed in the UK by  
International Book Distributors). £5.40.  
0 295 95757 3

## JANET BURROWAY:

Material Goods  
78pp. University Presses of Florida.  
\$7.95.  
0 8130 0670 8

of freedom and form." Change  
would be a fine thing:  
For everything under the sun, a time,  
Coffee and toast at breakfast,  
Christ's body for my dinner once a  
week,  
And the dark sweetness of your body  
when in season.  
("Terrestrial Love")

Walsh at least has a rhyme or two  
up his capacious sleeve; John Engels  
has only breathless syntax and gim-  
crack big thoughts: "Do I feel in my  
heart / that life has turned out / as  
I expected it? / May I speak / into  
the sky? Is the sky / any less or  
more / silent than the cold air / of  
these rooms of this old house which  
surrounds / this bed in which I am /  
awake in which / some people must /  
have died?" ("Poem on My Birth-  
day") "I do / not often now see  
much / swell with the old abundance  
of eyes / he goes on, but you'd never  
guess it from these hundred pages.

Duane Niatum's *Songs for the  
Harvester of Dreams*, on the other  
hand, goes in for mythopoetic mini-  
malism, celebrating "the primeval  
voices of forest animals and cedar  
and salmon / of the totemic legends  
and dreams" as the blurb puts it.  
Niatum is of American Indian descent.  
Most of the poems, written in  
short declarative sentences, leave us  
groping after context, but the book  
ends with a good autobiographical  
piece ("First Spring") about "A red-  
skin American gothic / Staring  
through forty-one years' at lost love  
and severed connections. The active  
use of Indian myth to explore his  
own living concerns suggests that  
Duane Niatum might profitably  
pursue this sort of anatomy, rather than  
adapt the role of cultural  
archaeologist.

Richard Blessing also gives us the  
low-down on aspects of American  
culture:  
Lenten, John Berryman used to like to  
say,  
Why do I ask me who I am to be  
What did he know, King? What did he  
know?  
He never sold a million. When he did  
net, my women looked at their lives  
like clouds of smoke and potholes  
and asked, What good is any of it now?  
("Elegy for Elvis")

Chad Walsh has a Technical Post-  
script to *Hang Me Up My Begging  
Bowl* in which he tells us about his  
new stanza form: "I began to wonder  
if there is some collective poetic con-  
sciousness at a given period, and if  
striving to bring into being some new  
form that would offer a fruitful blend  
of the clumsy imitation reminds us just  
how good Berryman's phonetic use  
of the vernacular was. Blessing's best  
poems are all about death: "Waiting  
Room", "Directions for Dying",  
"The Edges of Return", "Love  
Poem" ("Nothing is coming in every  
direction" he says in a line worthy of  
Larkin) - these are excellent. Else-  
where all sorts of influences show  
through the poems, from Stevens  
and Roethke to Snodgrass and Gins-  
berg, but the best of them are both  
intelligent and tender.

After all that free verse it's re-  
freshing to find Janet Burroway  
using metre and rhyme in *Material  
Goods*, though it has to be said that  
she's no Wilbur or Hecht. In the  
opening poem we are politely  
directed not to "read a lot of me at  
one sitting", which is good advice but  
hard on a reviewer's spare time.  
(The notion that poetry should only  
be taken in small doses is at best a  
half-truth; Pushkin and Keats were  
genuinely great poets who were liked,  
and I suspect the same is true of  
commoner readers.) Burroway's  
verse is practical, humorous, down-  
to-earth, full of brisk advice ("always  
go to the nuns in time of birth") and  
worldly, self-confident wisdom ("Li-  
sten, Guts are fine and I have got  
them"). This last is from a poem  
called "On Being Accused of Tame  
and Regular Verse", and one can see  
what sort of complacencies the ac-  
cuser had in mind; Burroway sometimes  
sounds like a campus Emily Post ("A  
woman is all of this poet's favourite  
hinge-words, used to concede just so  
much to the opposition before slam-  
ming the door on them - her family  
rhymes are enlisted, for the most  
part, in the service of order and  
sanity.

## FICTION

# Approving Arn Tem

Patricia Craig

## JUDY ALLEN:

December Flower  
176pp. Duckworth. £7.95.  
0 7156 1644 7

If there is a quintessential Duck-  
worth novel it's slyer and sharper  
than this one, more wayward in feel-  
ing and more disconcertingly humor-  
ous. Judy Allen's unexceptionable  
sue is rehabilitation: an old lady  
who was given up for senile recovers  
her wit, while a younger lady, newly  
widowed, recovers a sense of pur-  
pose.

Elta Marsh, whom bereavement  
has afflicted with uncharacteristic  
nervous anxieties, travels to the  
South Coast, in an access of family  
feeling, to visit her mother's long-  
estranged sister Mary - her closest  
surviving relative (or so she thinks).  
What's in store for Elta is a series of  
pleasant and unsettling encoun-  
ters, beginning, on the train, with a  
fascinating enthusiast who has an  
obsessive view on her (this is the  
first of the slightly dotty touches in  
which the book abounds). She finds  
her aunt bedridden and in the care  
of a housekeeper. Mrs Cullen, in  
whom every aspect of charmlessness  
is embodied; she meets her cousin  
Harry, his wife and daughter - one  
cheerful, one chilly and one sullen -  
and begins to understand that Aunt  
Mary's responsiveness is at least par-  
tially willful.

The term "Aunt M.", familiar to  
Elta from her childhood, has under-  
gone a rather feeble transformation  
which persists in her mind. The in-  
fant Elta might well have envisaged  
a queer relation called Arn Tem, but  
the name calling would surely  
have been discarded along with the  
misapprehension. It's as if Judy  
Allen feels the need to add typog-  
raphical embellishments to her rather  
flat narrative; you also find the  
name "Imuskeeper" in Mrs Cullen's  
speeches, turned into "ph" ("She's  
eighty-five," said Mrs Cullen) -

denoting an almost unimaginable  
variation in sound.

Elta, who means no harm to any-  
one, disapproves of Mrs Cullen's  
handling of Aunt M. and flings a  
bowl of tapioca pudding at the wall  
to show it. This gesture raises a  
laugh, or what passes for one, from  
the ill-used old invalid in the bed.  
From this point on, as a result of the  
alliance between herself and Elta,  
Aunt M.'s spirits and faculties begin  
to perk up. Judy Allen succeeds in  
conveying the pleasure of achieve-  
ment as well as underlining the value  
of approval as a therapeutic force; the  
course of M.'s temporary revival makes  
lively reading.

It's a truism of fiction that the  
very old are most engaging in an  
enfant terrible guise; and Aunt M.  
turns out to be a naughty old party  
who has filled her house with un-  
sightly objects (a preposterous electric  
fire, a musical cake-stand and a  
Mickey Mouse telephone), purely to  
annoy her daughter-in-law. The au-  
thor is rather hard on those who,  
like Harry's wife Margaret, assume a  
false delicacy over the more daunting  
requirements of the infirm. She is  
also rather insistent on the moral  
advantages of not giving way, hold-  
ing on, staying in one piece. You are  
instructed, as it were, to get the most  
out of living, even in restricted cir-  
cumstances. This is an unimpeach-  
able doctrine, but it smacks a little of  
the "count your blessings" school of  
fiction which exerted an influence on  
family reading in the last century.

Judy Allen's work for children is  
not in the least like that, or even like  
the typical popular story of the  
1940s, in which the heroine is faced  
with difficulties and overcomes them  
simply by adopting the right attitude.  
Her first adult novel comes closer to  
particular genre. If *December  
Flower* had been written for the  
juvenile market the author would  
probably have had to make her re-  
activated powers, an option not  
available to the conscientious realist.  
Otherwise the genre has supplied a  
plot, a cast and a method of treatment.  
A ready-made title could have been  
found there too: *Elta Puts Things  
Right*.

# Hero and heroin

Savkar Altinel

## ANTHONY OLCOTT:

Murder at the Red October  
224pp. Heddler and Steughton. £6.95.  
0 340 28264 9

Last year Martin Cruz Smith, an  
erstwhile editor of *For Men Only*  
and author of several pebble-sized  
novels, set in Moscow. Reviewers praised  
what they saw as the book's accurate  
portrayal of Russian life. PB men  
enthused over the enormous ad-  
vances paid to the author, bookshops  
broke out in posters and displays,  
and no doubt cash registers rang  
merrily. Only the *Literary Review*,  
the journal of the Soviet Union of  
Writers, remained unhappy,  
angrily protesting that all the  
public parks in Moscow were per-  
fectly safe, and that Smith's choice of a  
Sovietophile American businessman  
for a villain was an attempt to dis-  
credit *détente*.

Unluckily for the reputation of the  
Russian capital and the future of  
East-West relations, the iron laws of  
publishing economics demand that  
successes should be repeated; and  
now Anthony Olcott, who is evident-  
ly an academic Slavist, has written a  
new thriller based on mere or less  
the same formula as Smith's book.  
According to an American reviewer  
quoted on the back of the dust-  
jacket, *Murder at the Red October*  
has a better plot than its prede-  
cessor. This is not so. The plot of  
Gorky Park, which involved stolen  
Siberian fables and espionage, was  
merely unconvincing; the plot of  
*Murder at the Red October*, which  
involves a complicated scheme for  
exchanging Russian heroin for West-  
ern technology, is downright lud-  
icrous.

That, though, is not the  
problem. What really makes Olcott's  
book difficult to tolerate is that his  
picture of the "ordinary" Russian ex-  
ceeds even Smith's in its shameless  
sentimentality. Near the beginning of  
the novel, Duvakin, the hero, who is

night security officer at the open-  
minded Red October Hotel, meets a  
KGB man:

He wore a flowered tie, an olive  
ceut with broad black stripes, and  
panties of some shiny purple ma-  
terial. All these colours and stripes  
had been woven in East Germany,  
of fibres as unobtainable to Duvakin  
as they had been to his name-  
less forebears who had stood hat  
in hand while the horsemen of  
Genghis Khan trotted through the  
mud streets of their village.

That sets the tone, which is sustained  
by a variety of details such as Duvakin's  
sack-like suit, his cracked plastic  
shoes, his joy at being given a  
cigar of German cigarettes, his  
wonder at learning that there are  
such marvellous gadgets as pocket  
calculators in the West, and so on.  
The author manages to get him  
destroyed altogether, centring a  
last-minute reversal that brings about  
the most improbable unhappy  
ending.

It now looks as if we are in for a  
spate of thrillers set in the Soviet  
Union. To imagine the Russians  
as simple downtrodden muzhiks al-  
ways childishly ready to be won over  
by foreign tricksters may be flattering  
to Western egos, but it also distorts  
the truth and is condescending.  
Duvakin's countrymen have enough  
to undergo already, beginning with  
the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, without  
being caricatured in this way as well.

New *Stories 7*, the latest in the Arts  
Council of Great Britain/Hutchin-  
son/PEN series of short story  
anthologies, has just been published  
(222pp. £7.95. 0 09 147930 4). Edited  
by Alan Ross, the anthology includes  
stories by P. J. R. Riordan, Graham  
Swift, Peter Parker, John Haylock,  
Julian Barnes, Nancy Oliver, James  
Thurley, Anne Aylor, Colin Beardon,  
A. R. Barton, Anne Spillard, John  
Rudge, Morris Lurie, Alison Brack-  
enbury, Walker and Alan Seymour. The Arts  
Council and PEN regularly invite  
writers to send stories and poems for  
consideration as contributions to  
their anthologies. Further details are  
obtainable from the secretary, PEN,  
7 Dilke Street, London SW3 4JE.

# ELAINE FEINSTEIN

The Survivors

'Splendid saga... a moving and subtle story,  
superbly told. I cannot think who will not  
enjoy it' *Daily Telegraph* £7.95

# STUART EVANS

Temporary Hearths

The third novel in his Windmill Hill sequence.  
'A novel for our times' *Observer* £9.95

Edited by Francis King  
*My Sister and Myself*

The Diaries of J. R. Ackerley

'A blazing honesty marks these diaries' *Sunday  
Telegraph*. 'The gleam of truth in every  
felicitously-written line' William Trevor,  
*Guardian* £8.95

Martin Seymour-Smith  
**ROBERT GRAVES**

His Life and Work

'An admirable biography' Anthony Burgess,  
*T.L.S.* 'Compulsive reading... an extremely  
entertaining book' Anthony Powell, *Daily  
Telegraph*. 'A vivid and candid portrait'  
Charles Causley, *New Society*. £14.95

Edited by Paul O'Prey  
**IN BROKEN IMAGES**

Selected Letters of Robert Graves  
1914-1946

'A rich trove... a model piece of work;  
impeccably edited and extremely illuminating'  
*Listener*. 'Constantly exhilarating' *Guardian*.  
'A valuable adjunct to Seymour-Smith's  
history' Charles Causley, *New Society*. £12.95

**DANNIE ABSE**

Way Out In The Centre

'His new poems are among the best he has  
written' Peter Porter, *Observer*. 'Nothing less  
than pleasure is to be got from Dr Abse's  
poems' David Wright, *Sunday  
Telegraph*. Cloth £5.95. Paper £2.95

HUTCHINSON

# Similarly searching

Steve Ellis

## PETER REVELL:

Quest In Modern American Poetry  
245pp. Vision Press. £13.95.  
0 85478 454 3

In this study Peter Revell tackles five  
American long poems: Conrad  
Aiken's *The Divine Pilgrim*, Pound's  
*Cantos*, Eliot's *Four Quartets*,  
H.D.'s *Trilogy* and William Carlos  
Williams's *Paterson*. The book justifies  
this particular grouping by its  
understanding of each work as a poe-  
tic "quest": the poems share "the  
quality of providing the record of a  
spiritual quest... the growth of a  
poet's power to find spiritual signifi-  
cance in a materialistic world, a  
world deprived of meaning or the  
enormous". A certain awkwardness is  
occasionally noticeable in Revell's  
need to remind the reader of this  
common element in the face of what  
one might regard as the complete  
and that of Williams; we are assured  
however that "similarities in their  
interpretation of twentieth-century

civilization and in their poetic aims  
strike deeper than any differ-  
ences concerning the evaluation of  
new and old world cultures".  
Revell's study is indeed as much a  
search for unity as are the poems he  
discusses; he is aware that his use  
of the quest motif is sufficiently flexible  
to involve "the risk of imprecision  
and inexact generalization", as he  
states in his Preface, and he attempts  
to give shape to his discussion by  
paying particular attention to the  
presence in the poems of ideas from  
the Freud and Bergson. But even this  
device, and once more Revell is honest  
enough to admit or imply as much,  
sorts to a formative influence which  
was unsuspected as well as unac-  
knowledged, in the diffusion of ideas  
which goes to make up the spirit of the  
age.

The book does indeed fill out of  
familiar ideas; the reputation of  
familiar ideas; the chapters on Aiken  
and H. D. may be the most useful in  
that the ground they cover has re-  
ceived less prior attention than the  
rest. Yet Revell is a sensible and  
able writer: his discussion of Pound's  
*Quartets* for example - where the  
relevance of Bergsonian ideas is for

once convincingly presented - con-  
tains no revelations but is a useful,  
concise guide to the main themes.  
Stylistic questions, however, are  
hardly touched on: Revell recognizes  
the dissimilarities between the formal  
structure of the *Quartets* and the  
looser American "poems of quest",  
but avoids the interesting question of  
how Eliot's and Pound's desire to  
"purify the dialect of the tribe" re-  
lates to Aiken's enthusiasm for  
American culture and "the very lan-  
guage of the street" which had  
"genius in it".

The chapter on Pound is rather  
weak; it charts Pound's movement  
towards an apprehension of "the  
Plotinian One" in the *Cantos*, and  
his concentration on images of light  
and water that represent all things  
flowing back to this as their source,  
but the dimensions of what he  
himself describes as his "sum-  
mary account". Besides, we have to  
approach this chapter through a good  
deal of prefatory material that will  
be tedious for familiar readers of  
Pound, just as the discussion of  
*Quartets* is preceded by a common-  
place treatment of the "movement  
from dark to light" in Eliot's  
*Cantos*.

Chad Walsh has a Technical Post-  
script to *Hang Me Up My Begging  
Bowl* in which he tells us about his  
new stanza form: "I began to wonder  
if there is some collective poetic con-  
sciousness at a given period, and if  
striving to bring into being some new  
form that would offer a fruitful blend  
of the clumsy imitation reminds us just  
how good Berryman's phonetic use  
of the vernacular was. Blessing's best  
poems are all about death: "Waiting  
Room", "Directions for Dying",  
"The Edges of Return", "Love  
Poem" ("Nothing is coming in every  
direction" he says in a line worthy of  
Larkin) - these are excellent. Else-  
where all sorts of influences show  
through the poems, from Stevens  
and Roethke to Snodgrass and Gins-  
berg, but the best of them are both  
intelligent and tender.

## Alan Bold

## JOHN CROWLEY:

Little Big  
538pp. Collinson. £8.95.  
0 515 03065 8

This ostentatiously inventive saga is  
not designed for the common reader.  
It is, rather, made to measure for  
those already addicted to fantasy  
literature and ready, willing and able  
to slobber with a book whose formid-  
able length is given over to allegory,  
abstraction, supernaturalism and  
symbolism. John Crowley drops  
names and references into the narra-  
tive as clues to the attentive reader  
who can then place the novel in a  
suitably impressive context. There is  
a glimpse of a bookshelf bearing  
"Treatises of sermons, volumes of George  
MacDonald, Andrew Jackson Davis,  
Swedenborg, and a rumour of a cult  
of 'heretics' such as 'the poet Yeats,  
E.M. Forster, Tolstoy and the great  
shrewdness of a character who  
knew there must be a Ring'".

From the first page to the last Crow-  
ley takes the reader into his confi-  
dential world. The book is not meant to  
be read as a transcription of reality, for  
it is "Make-believe... It's a Tale,  
and Tales work out." The working  
out of the archetypal Tale allows  
Crowley to indulge himself to the  
extent of showing conventional fic-  
tional logic, making his characters  
bigger than life and seemingly  
transcending time and space  
within the Tale universe in the pre-  
lude of a Transcendental Tale, set in  
a rural retreat in New England and  
dealing in the contrast between  
paradise and an infernal  
paradise. For the City, even more than  
the nation, lived on 'Changar rapid

nothing, always for the better.  
Change was the lifeblood of the City,  
the animator of all dreams there...  
the fire that boiled up wealth and  
bustle and satisfaction."

Crowley's earthly paradise is con-  
structed by the founding father of  
the Tale, John Drinkwater, an eccen-  
tric architect whose follies are worth  
millions of dollars, builds a particu-  
larly whimsical folly called Edge-  
wood. This house, to be fit for the  
Tale, takes a shape that can in-  
corporate theological doctrine;  
above all it reflects the belief that  
"the other world is composed of a  
series of concentric rings, which as  
one penetrates deeper into the other  
world, grow larger. The further in  
occult theory of relativity explains  
the title of the book.

Drinkwater falls in love with the  
sight of a "young girl in white" in an  
apple tree. She is Violet Bramble, an  
elfin creature, and the architect mar-  
ries her in 1897. Together they pro-  
duce a dynasty whose fortunes are  
followed in the course of the book as  
they work themselves into the Tale.  
Thus Smoky Bramble marries Daily  
Alice who knows they are living in a  
deterministic universe: "It's a Tale, is  
all, and tales have beginnings and  
middles and ends. I don't know  
when the beginning was, but I know  
the middle." That statement comes  
near the end, when Good has squared  
up to Evil and it is possible that a  
happy ending is in sight - for those  
who believe in the story of "the  
house of four floors, seven chimneys,  
three hundred and sixty-five stairs,  
fifty-two doors."

Now far the reader will believe in  
this story depends on his tolerance  
for book-lore and literary show-  
manship. Crowley has an elusive  
and occasionally hasty style. Every  
person is a personification; every

conflict involves a moral principle.  
Describing a work attributed to John  
Drinkwater, Crowley provides his  
own aesthetic ideal: "pages and  
pages studded with capitalized ab-  
stractions... marginal glosses every  
page or so, and epigraphs, chapter  
headings, and all the paraphernalia  
that makes a text into an object,  
logical, articulated, unreadable.".  
Actually his own text is extremely  
readable, though there are times when  
the prose becomes as decorative as a  
Pre-Raphaelite picture.

Across the lake a boat was coming,  
laying out lacquered ripples. Its  
carved prow was intended for a  
swan, but it was grey and eyesless  
now, like the Swan on the dark lake  
of northern legend. It struck the  
bank with a hollow rattle of oar-  
locks.

Although Crowley is seeking to  
convey an impression of timeless in-  
nocence, it is possible to date his  
vision. Paradise is defined as "A  
world elsewhere", and there are tell-  
ing details of this alternative world.  
It thrives on permissive sex,  
psychedelic brilliance and the odd  
hallucinatory experience; it counter-  
poises gentle gurus with presidential  
baddies; and it advocates a return to  
nature. This is nothing less than a  
full-blown celebration of 1960s hip-  
pies. Flower children cavort like  
fairies and the hippies are as love-  
able as hebbies. Crowley has a fun-  
damental belief in the poetic purity  
of that time, and has transformed an  
era into a rich period piece in prose.

*At Pook is Here and Other Tales*, by  
William S. Burroughs, has recently  
been reissued in paperback (157pp;  
John Calder. £3.95. 0 7145 3859 0).  
First published together in a single  
volume in 1979, the three texts are  
"At Pook is Here", "The Book of  
Breathing" (illustrated here by Bob  
Gale) and "Electronic Revolution".

مكتبة الأص



# Infidelities

Laura Marcus

JOHN KRICH:

A Totally Free Men  
71pp. Berkeley, California: Creative Arts Book Company, 833 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94710. \$6.95. 0 916870 38 3

"Who is Castro? Who is he really?" asks Mario Larena, Castro's former official spokesman, in his personal account of the Cuban revolution. John Krich's novel attempts to provide an answer through the mode of simulated autobiography, the question thus ostensibly becoming Castro's own "Who am I?" Presented as the transcript of a tape, recorded by Castro during one sleepless night and addressed to his aide and lover, Celia Sanchez, after her death, it describes the significant events of the Cuban leader's life, personal and political. Krich's Castro speaks of his upbringing (Castro's own taped recollections of his childhood are not acknowledged in the text), his marriage and divorce, his revolutionary activities (those must fully documented in the histories of the Cuban revolution), the Bay of Pigs, the July 26 uprising and his "meetings with remarkable men" - Guevara, Sartre and Hemingway.

This is the standard self biography; the task Krich set himself was, presumably, that of imaginatively occupying his character and presenting him from the inside. The attempt to provide an authentic personal style is facilitated by the device of the tape-recording; introspection can become polemic (liberally sprinkled with hispanisms), the rhetorical voice being easier to simulate than written self-expression. In other re-terms of representation, the biographer's interior perspective by having Castro attack the individualism which is seen to conflict with a belief in the collective and the forces of history. The premises of Freudianism

are also denied: "The most forbidden topics are not necessarily the most germane". Krich is thus released from the necessity of writing of that which he cannot possibly know.

Running counter to this is a profusion of sexual metaphor which serves to suggest that Castro's political career was entirely the result of sublimation. Revolution and love are thus elided. Batista is the hated father, America becomes his mistress, the truest soldier is his "heroic guerrilla of the groin". Most startlingly, given the punitive treatment dealt out to homosexuals under Castro's rule, Krich has his hero admit to a suppressed sexual love for Guevara. This attempt to depict the processes of self-analysis in fact reads rather more like a crude psychoanalytical interpretation of biographical facts - very much from the outside. The true autobiographer's unconscious is a more elusive terrain.

The inconsistencies which result from this confusion of modes - direct address, oratory, confession, self-justification and self-exploration - suggest the extent of Krich's own uncertainties about the subject of his work. His admiration for "Fidel" does not exclude uneasiness in the presentation of what Castro's denigrators would describe as egomania. While wishing to depict his speaker as underlining his own mythic status, the elements which compose the myth are Krich's only resource in fleshing out his portrait.

This "unauthorized autobiography" offers nothing more revealing than the information contained in existing biographies of Castro (Krich's acknowledged), its major interest is perhaps the suggestion that defining the boundaries of autobiography is more than a matter of literary conventions. Offer scope and opportunities when they are detectable in a man's account of his own life. In Krich's novel they merely point to the impossibility of seeing from behind another person's eyes.

## Criminal proceedings

T. J. Binyon

DONALD MACKENZIE:

Raven's Revenge  
191pp. Macmillan, £5.95. 0 353 32880 9

Donald Mackenzie's hero, Raven, is a former policeman now living the good life on a Thames houseboat with a lady companion, a photographer. Until ex-Commander Drake, a bent policeman sent down years ago by Raven, comes out of prison with little else in his head but the idea of revenge. Quick-moving and sure-footed, with sharp, realistic London details.

RICHARD GRAYSON:

The Montmartre Murders  
176pp. Gollancz, £6.95. 0 575 03091 7

Paris at the turn of the century, with Inspector Gautier of the Sûreté clapping away in a 'fiacre' to investigate crime among the penurious artists of Montmartre. As with Richard Grayson's previous novels about Gautier, each interlude in the plot is stuffed full of information about contemporary French life: the result could perhaps be compared to eating peanut brittle liberally laced with gravel. It is certainly educational, but none the less enjoyable.

DOROTHY SIMPSON:

Six Feet Under  
192pp. Michael Joseph, £6.95. 0 7181 2082 5

The body of an unattractive, middle-aged spinster is found propped up on the seat of an outdoor lavatory in a small Kent village. Inspector Thorne is given the case. A really excellent example of the genre; well thought out and equally well executed, with some cunningly concealed surprises.

# In the shadow of giants

Monty Haltrecht

CHAIM POTOK:

The Book of Lights  
370pp. Heinemann, £7.95. 0 346 59604 3

The Book of Lights is set in the 1950s. Gershon Loran, a troubled, directionless New York Jewish student, goes on from an orthodox High School to a non-orthodox seminary. After being ordained he goes out as army chaplain to post-war Korea, and makes a trip to Japan via Hong Kong and Macao. These are the external events of Chaim Potok's new novel, and follow those of his own life. But its core is the hero's inner development. His questing nature is shown by his choice of a non-orthodox seminary, his first step away from safety and certainty, and his interest lies rather with the Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical writings, than with the safer Talmud. "Talmud tells us how the Jew acts," states his teacher, "Kabbalah tells us how Judaism feels, how it sees the world. We are Western secular beings today, rational, logical, yes, and so we are embarrassed by Kabbalah, which is so irrational, illogical." Gershon is reaching out for the world beyond the physical and the palpable: he has visions, seeing and talking to people who are not there, and once, in the library, death enters "in the form of an impenetrable jet blackness".

## The peephole of history

William Logan

TERRY COLEMAN:

Thanksgiving  
445pp. Hutchinson, £7.95. 0 09 146530 3

Having previously written a fictionalized account of the settling of Australia, Terry Coleman has now turned to America in the period between the arrival of the Pilgrims and the heroic seizure of Manhattan. The heroes are refashioned as Wolsey Lowell, grand-daughter of a bastard son of Cardinal Wolsey. Student of William Brewster, fluent in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, she is "a splendid Biblical scholar" and apparently gifted with precognition ("Manhattan had no soaring pillars of stone, but the air had a magical aspiration in it").

Following the first disastrous winter, when half the Plymouth colonists die, she marries the Pilgrims' (fictional) pastor, Francis Wheaton. Though historians have shown that the Pilgrims did not live with quite as much Puritan austerity as has been ascribed to them, Wheaton typifies a narrow religious mentality, stalking around colonial in bitter cold, acclimating the temperate air. In deference to modern tastes, the couple's sex-life is not stunted. These passionate Pilgrims benefit from an unusual verb: "even as he had splashed into his beloved wife...". It is hardly surprising when Wheaton, torn between religion and passion, and still thinking Massachusetts is Virginia, wanders off some years later into a snowstorm and disappears.

This impediment having been disposed of, Wolsey and her infant twin daughters settle with an Irish captain in Manhattan. The change of air-ages them rapidly. One of the daughters is soon old enough to marry a French explorer who, seeking an expedition from Quebec through the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi, the trip ends in a massacre, perhaps an Indian punishment for their having fouled the wilderness with their *ménage à trois*. It is not the last time in this novel that the panorama of history becomes a peephole.

Rebekah, the surviving twin, returns to Quebec, embarks to France, takes up with the English ambassador and, after years of man-

Isaac Bashevis Singer has given the occult element in life a poetic resonance, be it in the Polish *steht* before the holocaust or among the survivors in America. Potok is alive to the same historic tradition. But he does not have a sense of dramatic effect, he doesn't vary the pace or highlight important moments - everything has equal emphasis, so it is difficult to see, except in retrospect, what is significant. Gershon rejects the chance of being exempted from the army because "whatever it was that he was waiting for would never come to him in this twilight urban world of fragments"; a crucial moment, hazily realized, which might easily be missed by the reader altogether. There is overall only an air of generalized anguish.

The important scene in the first part of the novel is the ordination, when an honorary degree is given to Harry Truman, the man who ordered the destruction of Hiroshima and the thermonuclear experiments. Einstein too is present. "I made perhaps one great mistake in my life," he confesses; "when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made." But we can grasp the importance of this scene only much later, when nuclear guilt is indicated as a basis for the anguish, and at last a shape to the novel begins to emerge. Gershon's room-mate at the seminary, Arthur Leiden, is the son of an atomic physicist who is a colleague of Einstein's. Arthur also comes out to

covering through various courts and capitals, returns to Manhattan with the English invading force. The furious activity, ranging from an Indian in the horse races at Newmarket, from broken-down John Smith to apocryphal Peter Stuyvesant, cannot disguise the emptiness in which these stereotypes are cast or the characters are fitted.

They speak the language of Shaw, not Shakespeare, and are not inquisitors ("the palaces and dungeons of the hero's mind"). A paragraph about ice echoing Dickens's famous lines on fog proves, though, that when Coleman apprentices himself in a

master his prose need not be distinguished. But his shrewdness regarding visual imagery - spider webs in a dead eardrum's rim, voices going at twin waterfalls - unfortunately does little to slow his relentless valuing of history. Wolsey Lowell, whom Coleman makes responsible for the first Thanksgiving and the lack of bloodshed at the capture of Manhattan, makes history not more but more obscure, blanketed at it is by the dramatic conventions of the present. Minor characters may be important as major events; contemporary historians are busy recovering the reality of the ordinary. Even if popular consumption, however, history must be more like a convenience for moving such characters across oceans or into graves.

## Sleight deceptions

Helen Harris

DAVID BOSWORTH:

The Death of Descartes  
182pp. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, \$9.95. 0 8229 3448 5

Misleadingly but arrestingly titled, *The Death of Descartes* consists of five works - four short stories and a novella - which all play some sort of trick on the reader. He thinks he has grasped the plot; it bifurcates. He thinks he is embarking on one story; it turns out to be another. This is writing which thrives on deceit; it is clever, sharp and virtuosic.

The first of the four stories, "Excerpta from a Report of the Commission", is presented as a series of numbered exhibits, like evidence at a trial. Told in the first person - it is the ideals of the narrator's youth that are on trial - it takes the form of a single sentence elaborated to such a length, but returning obsessively to the same phrase: "and you have not driven your young child, who is dying from leukaemia, to hospital. The story painter, seems only the time taken by issues of their entire marriage and lives." Allied Life also has a central motif figure: oppressed by family circumstances, although less tragic, more mundane. All that happens is that the man is called down from

Korea with the army, but solely in order to make the journey to Japan, and not only to Hiroshima - for the destruction of which his father was in part responsible - but also to Kyoto. In the final pages we learn the importance of his mother's being so art have been the target for the bomb, but it was she who recommended that another target be found, in order to preserve the art treasures. Gershon, making the trip with Arthur, shares his guilt, and is identified finally as the guilt of the entire generation, who are consequently in flight of one kind or another.

Arthur manages a doubtful epiphany, but Gershon, now in touch with "the messenger from the other side," ends up in Jerusalem, continuing his studies with his old teacher. These are "a commentary and balance to what he sees". In the last pages, too, the idea is put forward that the present generation is also the shadow of the giants of the previous generation. Not only are Arthur's parents giants, but so even are Gershon's, because they were in Israel buying land to build on when they were accidentally killed.

Potok has chosen a difficult and exalted theme, but the development of the hero is not sufficiently related to the experiences he undergoes during his quest; nor are the changes themselves made vivid or interesting. For all the emphasis on light, he proves to be rather a gloom Odysseus.

Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America  
491pp. Penguin, £2.50. 0 14 039 006 5

Crevecoeur's account of life in the American Colonies, written in the character of a Pennsylvania farmer called James, begins with disingenuous analogies for the artlessness of the narrator's style and the homeliness of his observations. He is prone, like the early English topographical poets, to draw moral lessons from the landscape, the activities of animals and so forth. In the course of presenting an idealized impression of agrarian harmony (the qualities of industriousness and frugality well to the fore). Whenever he looks, he finds (for prospects, "the substantial habitation of wealthy people settled these 120 years on those happy bottoms". Full of engaging anecdotes ("I once saw a remarkable instance of the sagacity of an Indian dog") and reflections, Crevecoeur's letters are among the earliest works to adumbrate "the artistic possibilities in certain truly American themes".

"Dice", the most quotable of the four stories, the most absorbed by stylistic twists and turns, is also the shortest - an indication, perhaps, that these tricks alone might not sustain a longer piece or an entire novel. And the title novella, some seventy-five pages long, is the most conventional in presentation and form: the tale of a retired detective, called in by his ex-colleagues to help investigate a probable murder, who finds himself simultaneously investigating and assessing his own life. Both investigations are ultimately inconclusive. For the detective questions his own right to investigate and, loses the conviction necessary to complete either. His hesitations symbolize Bosworth's central concern: who on earth does the narrator think he is? It makes for a clever, thoughtful, provoking collection, with much sleight of hand. It does not, however, make for many enduring memories of characters or scenes.

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# Paperbacks in brief

Patricia Craig

ANTHONY TROLLOPE:

The Kellys and the O'Kellys  
337pp. Oxford University Press. £2.50. 0 19 281577 5

Trollope's second novel, reissued in "The World's Classics" series with a pleasing introduction by William Trevor, deals with two proposed marriages and the ways in which each is opposed and obstructed; it also presents a clear-eyed view of social distinctions in pre-Famine Ireland. Trollope's use of an Irish vernacular, however - his "boshtoons" and "shtong shirinks" and "begorras" - is less satisfactory than William Trevor claims.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD:

Tender is the Night

347pp. Penguin, £1.95.

Reprinted here is the original 1934 version of *Tender is the Night*, not the revised text which Malcolm Cowley prepared in 1951. It remains one of those constantly beguiling, imperfect works of art that we read both for the light it throws on its author and in the light of its author's life (Walter Allen) - not autobiographical in an obvious sense, but drawing deeply on the glamour, destructiveness and waywardness of the Fitzgeralds' existence. Zelda, as many memoirs and biographies have made plain, is recreated in the schizophrenic heiress Nicole, in whom the corrupting power of hedonism and instability is embodied.

J. HECTOR ST. JOHN DE CREVECOEUR:

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FANNY BURNEY:

Evelina  
421pp. Oxford University Press. £2.50. 0 19 281596 2

"To draw characters from nature, though not from life, and to mark the manners of the times," this was Fanny Burney's avowed intention, which she carried out successfully: *Evelina* is also the first English novel to consider the marriageable young girl as subject rather than object. Its heroine's education in social behaviour makes entertaining reading even today; when it first appeared in 1779, the novel was full of incidental instructions for its readers on ways to avoid the pitfalls of gaudiness and indecorum.

MAY SINCLAIR:

The Times Sisters

421pp. Virago, £3.50. 0 86068 243 9

The Brontë sisters inspired this novel (first published in 1914), and

the circumstances of their lives - the vicarage isolated on the Yorkshire moors, the angry, aggrieved father - supplied the background, but May Sinclair's three sisters conspicuously lack the Brontës' resources. They are more ordinary, anxious, defenceless girls whose hopes are attached to a vision of domestic fulfillment. As is usual in the work of this author, *The Three Sisters* is a story of sacrifice, frustration, misalliance and profitless integrity. Though she hasn't yet achieved the sharpness and economy that distinguished her later novels (*Harriet Frean* and *Mary Olivier* in particular), May Sinclair shows here the capacity for psychological insight which makes her one of Virago's most interesting rediscoveries.

IAN NIAL:

A Galloway Childhood

182pp. Wildwood House, £3.95. 0 7045 0440 5

Unabashed nostalgia is the tone in which Ian Niall's autobiography is composed. According to this account of his childhood, the world he grew up in was exceptionally rich and joyful, characterized by abundance in every area. If the book is unexceptionable, it is also unexceptional: good on the more picturesque details of bygone Scottish rural life, though, and charmingly illustrated by C. F. Tunncliffe.

DANIEL DEFOE:

Roxana  
404pp. Penguin English Library £1.35. 0 14 043149 7

"... was ever Woman so stupid to choose to be a Whore, where she might have been an honest Wife?" Roxana is, and suffers for it, becoming the victim of misfortunes and miseries which are caused at least partly by the pang of conscience. Roxana's vicissitudes form a typical courtesan's progress, from wretchedness to glory and back again. This Penguin edition comes with notes and a useful introduction.

BARRY RUBIN:

Paved With Good Intentions  
426pp. Penguin, £1.95. 0 14 00 5964

Barry Rubin examines the court of American-Iranian relations from the establishment of the first US diplomatic mission to Iran in 1883 to the Hostage Crisis of 1979-80: an event which led to "saturation coverage" by the media. Concise, comprehensive and unbiased, this study casts a great deal of light on American foreign policy towards the Third World over the past thirty five years.

REBECCA WEST:

The Harsh Voice  
251pp. Virago, £2.95. 0 86068 249 8

Four novellas, three set in America, two dealing with women's superior business abilities and one (the English ones) about the horrors wrought by insensitivity and a capacity for interference, make up this striking collection (first published in 1935). Richard Wynne Errington's lines - "... the harsh voice / We hear" when money talks, or hate when it simply the title as well as indicating Rebecca West's themes.

REBECCA WEST:

The Meaning of Treason

439pp. Virago, £4.50. 0 86068 256 0

Rebecca West's celebrated work on traitors and treason, which grew out of a commission from the New Yorker to report the trial of William Joyce in 1945, is now reissued with revisions as well as a new introduction by the author which is characteristically trenchant and vigorous. The book itself, thirty-three years after it was first published, still stands as a classic of higher journalism.

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